

# THE SCORE

A MUSIC MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

Number 13, September 1955

KRAUS REPRINT

Nendeln / Liechtenstein

1969

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Volume 10, Number 13

Number 13, September 1969

Published by The Score Publishing Co. Ltd., London

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KRAUS REPRINT

A Division of

KRAUS-THOMSON ORGANIZATION LIMITED

Nendeln/Liechtenstein

1969

Printed in Germany

# THE SCORE

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Editor: WILLIAM GLOCK

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According to present plans, the December issue will include the last part of David Drew's study of Messiaen; an article by Marc Wilkinson, on Edgard Varèse; a translation of Hermann Abert's classic essay on The Personality of Mozart (with revisions and footnotes by Anna Amalie Abert); Aleksandr Helmann's Sonnet, for piano; and a considerable section of News and Comments.

The magazine appears four times a year. It can be obtained for an annual subscription of one guinea (including postage), or \$3, or the equivalent in other currencies, from the Publishers, to whom cheques or postal orders should be made payable.

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# THE SCORE

## AND I.M.A. MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

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Number 13, September 1955





## COMMENT

### Aleksandr Helmann, d. 2.9.54

This issue commemorates the tenth anniversary of Webern's death, and also pays tribute to two other great men: Georges Enesco and Aleksandr Helmann. Enesco had had a long and noble career; Helmann, cut short at the age of forty-one and prevented by illness from playing in public during his last years, was not a world-famous musician. But his qualities were much like Enesco's. He was both gentle and a lion; he was humble; he believed in the destiny of mankind, and where he saw this faith expressed in the music of others, Dallapiccola's for instance, his enthusiasm moved one almost to tears. He founded a society dedicated to the works of the Norwegian composer, Fartein Valen, and was sometimes held to be a crank for devoting himself to such a wayward cause. But again, he had discovered in Valen a kindred spirit. He had written down the following, in some notes that he once showed me:

'Valen had a quite unique and refreshing attitude towards the controversy about tonal tradition and twelve-note music. He regarded evolution in nature as God's way of assuring the harmony of things in their relations to each other—constant change being necessary to bring about the happiest possible way of all things fitting into their time. And so—*ipso facto*—to compose in the twelve-note technique was a Godly thing to do—as any good Christian could see. Replying to critics who argued that this horrible-sounding new music disregarded all the good rules inherited from the 19th century, he said, mildly, that God's time is infinite and no one century is more sacred to God than any other.'

Enesco often spoke in such terms. I remember asking him, at Bryanston in 1951, if he would come back again the next year and give another master-class in violin playing. 'If it is God's will that I should still be alive', he said. Only a few men could speak such words in ordinary conversation, but coming from him they sounded like a magnificent phrase by Bach.

Helmann had not this grand manner; perhaps I should have said, instead of 'both gentle and a lion', that he seemed always to have a sword at his side. His intelligence was sharp, his spirit flashing; his ear could detect stresses and balances in the most complicated passages, of which others would have no inkling. He had been trained as a boy of fourteen by Schillinger, who insisted that he should be able

to recognize at least fifty notes to an octave. One afternoon he had shut himself up in Schillinger's laboratory, and after two hours of intense listening had distinguished eight different shades of the note G. Suddenly there was a loud bang at the door, and a woman said to him in an agonized voice: 'Say, mister, if you play that one note any longer I'll go crazy.' The joy with which he told this story was so typical of him. But it illustrates, besides his humanity, the marvellous refinement of hearing that he brought to his every activity as a musician—as listener and pianist and composer. He believed in the twelve-note method not as a denial of tonality but as an enlargement of it; and in his choice of harmonies he proceeded as with those eight different shades of the note G. Everything was tested by ear, rather than left to the mere chance that it derived from a given twelve-note series. I think it was this fact that made him so enthusiastic over the last movement of Stravinsky's *Septet*, which I remember hearing together with him. He sensed at once that in this movement which includes so many 2nds and major 7ths, Stravinsky had faced a problem such as he himself was struggling with, and that he had solved it not through any formula but by the most exact hearing of the relationships involved.

Helmann wrote little music; he had strength only to work an hour or two a day. His *Sonnet* for piano was chosen as one of the six English works to be sent on to the International Jury for the festival at Baden-Baden this year. I heard him play it several times, and ill as he was he made it a thing of magical beauty. Who else could play it I don't know—perhaps Pietro Scarpini. I believe it has a unique quality as the only piece of twelve-note piano music written by a virtuoso and employing all the subtleties of pedalling and of tone-production of which Helmann was a master. It will be published in the next issue of this magazine.

Alas, I heard Helmann play only this *Sonnet* and some Mozart: the D major piano sonata, K.576, on a fortepiano. He had once possessed a Stein fortepiano for a long period, understood and treasured every detail of its mechanism, and from talking to him and watching him play this instrument I learned more about Mozart than ever from anyone else.

Mozart was his ideal. He revered Dallapiccola, as I've said, and late Stravinsky. And his beloved Valen. Our other subjects of conversation were rhythm, as it arose from polyphony; his own music, which absorbed his energies during those six precious months of our acquaintance; and motor cars, of which he had an expert knowledge. The last time but one I ever saw him, I had to face the ordeal of reporting at his house with a Humber of 1931 that I'd just bought for £30; a machine that looked like nothing on earth (and still does), and that he was sure would cost hundreds of pounds in repairs before I was much older. As I left, after an evening of Valen and Stravinsky, he came outside to hear the noise of the engine. I could hardly have been more apprehensive had he asked me to play the opening bars of Mozart's D minor *Fantasy*.

But all was well. All was very well during those six months.

W.G.



## ANTON WEBERN

*Robert Craft*

### BIOGRAPHY

Anton von Webern (he dropped the prefix of nobility 'von' in his later years) was born in Vienna on December 3rd, 1883. Descended from an ancient Austrian family of landowners in the lower Tyrol, he was schooled first in Vienna and then in the gymnasiums of Graz and Klagenfurt. In 1902 he entered the University of Vienna as a student in philosophy and as a pupil of Guido Adler's in musicology. Receiving the PH.D. degree there in musicology in 1906, his thesis on Isaac's *Choralis Constantinus* was published in the *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich* series. Thus Webern is probably the first composer to have begun as a trained musicologist. Unfortunately no exegete has yet stressed this most important aspect of the master's background: Webern the student of 15th century polyphony, of the motets of Matheus de Perusio and others whose complicated vertical rhythms graph so much like his own, Webern of the hoquet, of the canon, of the closed form, of the proportional system.

The event of most consequence in Webern's life was his meeting with Schoenberg in 1904. He became Schoenberg's first pupil and remained his life-long disciple. At times the relationship was almost fanatical, as certain of Webern's letters re Schoenberg (published in *Melos*, December, 1953) show. Webern wrote the first critical study of Schoenberg's music, and with Berg the three were in almost daily association from 1906-1912, the period of the beginnings of atonality and of so many other of Schoenberg's radical innovations.

There are no other 'events' until the tragedy of his death. From 1906 onwards he was nearly always active as a conductor. In that year he fulfilled engagements as an opera conductor in Prague and in various German cities. In Vienna after the war he conducted and supervised much of the advanced music presented by Schoenberg's *Society for Private Performances*. He conducted the *Wiener Arbeiter Symphonie Konzerte* and the *Kunststelle* choir from 1923-33 and in 1927 he was made a conductor of the Vienna radio. He was often a guest conductor of the B.B.C. and of radio orchestras and concert organizations in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Donaueschingen, Munich, Frankfurt, Zürich and Barcelona.

Ernst Krenek has said that when Webern conducted a Haydn symphony he made it sound in such a way that one felt one had understood it for the first time. Webern seems to have been an extremely sensitive, fanatically demanding, but

patient conductor. His physical fear of noise made him reluctant even to begin rehearsing, knowing in advance that the loudness, coarseness, bad intonation, false expression, and wrong articulation would be torture. One can reconstruct Webern the conductor from Webern the composer. The dynamics of his music change from note to note and most often so do *tempi* change, by *calando*, *accelerando*, *ritardando*, etc. But dynamic and *tempo* controls and articulation always function structurally and are by no means adjuncts. Webern is the composer of the 'expressive *ppp* semiquaver' and his characteristic directions in the music are 'like a whisper', 'scarcely audible', 'dying away'. He employs *crescendo* and *decrescendo* for a single short note whose execution—especially the *decrescendo*—is by no means part of the technique of the ordinary musician at present. Webern must also have been metronomically precise. It is my conviction that the metronome marks in his own music are to be followed exactly, that his own 'circa' is to be allowed but little leeway.

The characteristic Webern story is the one in which he was to conduct the first performance of the Berg Violin Concerto in Barcelona in 1936. In 2 of 3 rehearsals he had prepared only the first 8 bars to his satisfaction; then after a scandal a less particular man conducted it with the one rehearsal that remained.

From 1918 onwards, Webern lived at Mödling and later at Maria-Enzersdorf, both near Vienna, composing and teaching composition. Before the war he had participated in Viennese intellectual life. There are the two portraits of him by Kokoschka done in 1912 and 1914. He was also prominent in the *Blaue Reiter* and Karl Kraus groups, and he seems to have known his two great and very different contemporaries, Robert Musil and Rudolf Kassner. But later in life he withdrew more and more. He was always a devout catholic and increasingly a Christian mystic. He lived in and for music and what love was left was for flowers and for the poetry of Hölderlin and Rilke and the Greek tragedians. A pupil has called him 'a fanatical lover of all plants and of everything that grows'.

His situation both as man and musician was made disastrous by the Nazis who after the annexation of Austria banned his music, burned his writings, and forbade him all activity except the teaching of a few pupils. He was even obliged to proof-read for a Viennese music publisher in order to escape slave labour during the war. The increased bombings of Vienna towards the end of the war forced the sensitive Webern to take refuge from the noise. He went to Mittersill, a small town in the Pinzgau about 80 miles south-west of Salzburg, to the house of his son-in-law Benno Mattel. There he learned that his soldier son had been killed just before the truce. And there he himself was shot to death on September 15th, 1945.

Webern's murder—or tragic accident—has not yet been officially explained. According to one account his slayer was an American soldier—Mittersill was in the American zone—from an occupation unit noted for the precipitancy of its trigger fingers. The war had been concluded five months before but Mittersill was under a curfew. Webern had stepped out of his house in the evening to smoke a cigarette.

He may or may not have been ordered by an American soldier, may or may not have misunderstood the order, may or may not have fumbled in his pockets to some reasonable suspicion. The *Wiener Kurier*, a U.S. sponsored German language paper, reported the affair as follows: 'About 10 o'clock in the evening he was standing in front of his son-in-law's house enjoying a last cigarette before retiring when there was a sudden series of shots. Dr. Webern staggered into the house and said to his wife, "I've been hit". He died soon afterwards. His son-in-law was arrested. The motive for the attack remains a complete mystery.'

According to another account the Mattel house was being searched by the Americans and Webern was told to wait in the street, where he was shot by 'mistake'. Visiting Mittersill, coming through the snowy Thurn pass above the long green valley the death seems doubly cruel: Webern shot, a man of 61 who could never have seemed dangerous even to the dullest soldier, who was horrified by violence and noise, and in this quiet, rude, isolated village which is in perpetual curfew anyway. He is buried in the Mittersill churchyard under a simple iron cross, with his wife Minna, d. 1949. *Noli tangere meos circulos*, and like Archimedes he died.

My conception of Webern's character and personality is second-hand. I can only repeat the impressions of others. Ernest Ansermet tells a story that might conceivably mean something to a listener on his way to the music. Ansermet says that to have seen and heard Webern touch a single note on the piano was to have observed a man in an act of devotion. At the piano he would cause the mathematical marvels to disappear and instead one would be aware only of the purest relationships of sound. Ansermet has said also that Webern attended one of his rehearsals of *Daphnis and Chloe* in Vienna in 1940 or 1941, that Webern had never heard it before (*sic*) and that very little impressed with it his only comment was: 'why does he use four of each of the winds? Beethoven used only two and it is so mighty (*es ist so gross*)'.

Dallapiccola has described his own rather clandestine visit to Webern in Vienna in 1943 as a turning-point in his life. But all who knew Webern were in awe of his dedication, of his hopelessly high aims and his total realization of them (and even if he himself had been without hope, 'the loss of all hope does not deprive human reality of its possibilities; it is simply an attitude towards these same possibilities' (Heidegger); or perhaps it was, as Tolkien says about his hobbit, that 'he had not needed hope so long as despair could be postponed'). There are few comparable examples in any activity of such purpose, of such disregard of the world, of a man hissed and ridiculed his entire life going his own way with such infallibility. But on the other side, how were we to know that in 20 years our age would be characterized by a majority of the youngest Western European musicians as 'the age of Webern'?

Webern's mind was always radical; it pursued immediately to ultimate consequences. There is in fact nothing in the music of Webern but ultimate consequences.



If, in Sartre's phrase, Giacometti has taken the fat off space, then Webern has defined the *horror vacui* of silence.

I am not shy of wearing my respect for Webern the man, but in writing about the music I am afraid of conveying nothing but my own love and of 'explaining', to adapt Dr. Johnson, 'what no listener has found difficult, and explaining it wrong'. One writes in words about a musical experience knowing that the words are not co-relates for the experience; but one writes for the people who may have had a similar experience and who might find the words meaningful in a similar way. In the case of Webern, however, few people have any considerable experience of the music and words are therefore all by themselves, and hardly co-related even to other words.

Analyses and technical discussions are quite as far from a musical experience as aesthetic *bavardage*. The form the latter usually takes with reference to Webern is the discussion of historical determinism and musical evolution in which the composer is 'aware of his historical opportunity'. A dialectical ladder is set up and then Webern is made to climb it 'acquisition' by 'acquisition'. I do not myself believe in the Marxist historical awareness and prefer the cliché about 'the inner necessities of the art'. I also do not believe the acquisitions were consciously acquired in that particular way, and so will treat Webern as a musician working exclusively with the materials of music.

#### THE MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

##### *Opera 1 and 2: the beginning in tonality*

Webern's musical personality is maturely defined from the first. The only non-Webernian attribute of the *Passacaglia* Op. 1—its length: it is by far his longest work—must not obscure the fact that it is an amazing inaugural example of Webern's famous economy. The Webern profile is there in all its features. Total variation is one of the principles of Webern's later music. He conceives it as the exact opposite of the idea of development. And here in his first composition is Webern writing not sonata development music like Berg, but *Passacaglia* variations. Also Webernian is the theme which uses a contrapuntal device—the 2nd motive of the theme is the crab inversion of the first—occurring in almost every late Webern score. It is important to remember that Webern was always a contrapuntist.

The *Passacaglia* theme's chromatic structure must also be noticed: 11 of the 12 tones are present in the harmony. Between first and last chords of D minor, with the ordinary cadence, are six strong position chords leading the harmony rather far afield for such a short tonal compass.

Other Webern features are (1) an extensive use of triplets. It was by the various combinations of triplets that Webern was later to enrich the vocabulary of rhythm;

<sup>1</sup> See list of Webern's works on page 21.

(2) a transparency of instrumental writing in spite of some rather Brahmsian climaxes; (3) the extreme quietness of most of the music; (4) the rests between the notes of the theme; —silence is an element in the music of Webern, the perfectly calculated time of 'memory and desire' inside the music. Silence has never before been 'composed' to such an extent as in (for example) the *Symphony* Op. 21.

The *a cappella* chorus *Entflieht auf leichten Kähnen*, Op. 2, is the first example of Webern's famous brevity. It is again a contrapuntal work but with a much more closed form than the *Passacaglia*. Built entirely on canonic principles, it is a strict two-part canon with each voice doubled in sixths and thirds, followed by a middle-section canon in 4 parts, and concluded by a recapitulation of the first two-part canon. It is interesting to note that Webern returns to this choral style of paralleled intervals as late as the 5th movement of the cantata Op. 31, where the intervals are major 7ths.

### *Opera 3, 4, and 5: beyond tonality*

Unlike Schoenberg and Berg, Webern was all his life an atonal composer without tonal nostalgia. 'Atonal', like 'communist', does not mean etymologically what we mean by it, but has come to be the indispensable designation for a kind of music composed after 1907 and especially by the Schoenberg school. Atonal music is not generated from a harmonic bass, and its chromatic, non-triadic roving harmony exceeds the analysis of so-called tonal harmony. Of course certain so-called atonal music could be spelled according to tonal figuration but it would stretch the system to absurdity: i.e. 'such and such is a 13th chord on G<sup>V</sup> with "added notes".' The final cadence of Stravinsky's *Danse Sacrale* is a case where such an analysis works—a dominant to tonic with 'added notes'—but the bass is harmonic and there is therefore no condition of atonality. It is interesting today to listen to parts of say Schoenberg's 2nd Quartet and mark the stray sheep excursions into atonality and the rather sheep-like return to the tonal fold, whose border is of course as arbitrary as the ear's education.

Webern's first songs still evoke tonality by harmonic 3rds and 6ths, by octave doublings and by the frequent melodic use of the interval of the fourth (in atonal music, intervals are named by their span in semitones but we stick to the habit of describing them harmonically).

Webern's first atonal music is remarkable beyond its harmonic novelty. The George songs and the 5 pieces for string quartet or string orchestra virtually abolish sequence and repetition and the larger principle of symmetry. This is a large step ahead of the Op. 2 chorus which is  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd recapitulation. From now on, the Webern form will be the short movement wherein tiny cells are varied not by the usual elaborations but by contrapuntal kaleidoscoping: imitation, inversion, rhythmic shifting. The dramatic leaps of Webern's late vocal style are already ear-marked, though here the singer's rather simple line is guided on most pitches by the piano,

and by its own recurring notes. The string style of the 5 pieces abounds in harmonics, tremolos, *ponticello*, *col legno*, and *pizzicato*. Already used structurally here, it is one of the Webern wonders how these string resources, quite as natural as ordinary bowing, become part of the musical form and fibre in the late works: for example, the use of *pizzicato* in the Bach *Ricercar*.

### *Opus 6: orchestral style*

Webern's only work for very large orchestra ought by now to have become the popular repertoire piece that is its inevitable fate. Schoenberg's word, *Klangfarbenmelodie*, is used to describe the fragmentation and distribution of a musical line or phrase through instruments of different *timbres*. These Op. 6 pieces, in which Webern's colour-sound world is already full-grown, antedate Schoenberg's coinage of the term (in his *Harmonielehre*, 1911) and his illustrations of it in *Herzgewachse* and the 4 songs Op. 22; but Schoenberg's 'changing colours' in the orchestral pieces Op. 16 are Webern's undeniable source.

In Webern's sound-world there are no masses and no textures, thick or thin. Instead there is polyphony of—mostly—solo instruments. There are a few *tutti* in Op. 6 of course, but when one hears the usual orchestral music of the 1910 period the sound of these six pieces is as fresh and delightful as it was when Webern conceived them 45 years ago.

As we have said above, Webern shuns the extended rhetoric of a single instrument and deploys his phrases in vari-coloured links—which however must be played chain-wise, not pointillistically. At first the listener might be reminded of a switch-board sporadically lighting up, but the plot of wires between the lights is what must be illuminated. Webern in the six pieces and ever thereafter likes to contrast solo strings with multiple strings; likes the low notes of the flute with the low notes of the muted trumpet; likes low harp and tuba; likes celeste tactfully used. Brass instruments are almost always muted in Webern (after Op. 1 they play without mutes only in the chorale of Op. 31).

### *Opera 7-12: the short pieces*

All Webern's music is short; but opera 7-12 are short even for him, and especially opera 9, 10 and 11 whose 14 pieces average about 40 seconds each. But Webern's brevity must not be thought of as mere reaction to late-romantic length. His time scale is the unit in each case of a single complete musical idea—musical object rather, because these tiny crystals are static. Webern is expressing, as Schoenberg put it, 'a whole novel in a single sigh'. Having suspended both tonal harmonic movement in which one chord engenders and compels another, and those illusions of movement, repetition and sequence, Webern in this period is in fact composing music of an entirely different order. The Schoenberg piano pieces Op. 19 are an influence, but the Webern dimension was already there, and after his



Opus 19 Schoenberg was to return to the rhetoric and the time scale of Brahms, whereas Webern inhabited ever after a completely new time world begotten only with the new materials of 12-note composition. However close Webern was to Schoenberg in this period, their paths had already diverged.

The marvel of the short pieces is that in spite of all the compression, fragmentation, 'purification of the motive'—in the sense that the motive must be neither more nor less than essential—they are not large forms reduced but are tiny forms *de jure* and of their own logic. It must be admitted that the short pieces are difficult to programme; they embarrass other music and are ill-mannered next to a normal-length piece.

Webern, always composing to the ear even when he is most vainly appealing to the eye, is in short pieces a still careful speculator as to the ear's capacities. In his music, everything must be heard, not merely an impression of *Klangfarben* or structure or design, but the actual pitches of all the notes. Here in Opus 8 and in Opus 10 nos. 1 and 4 where there is a minimum of 'chords', where the vertical nudity is so extreme that there is in fact nothing but melody, Webern is stating his extreme concern for the ear. And it is the same ever after; you can and do hear even in opera 18, 19 and 20 but most clearly after these works—all of the notes. On the other hand, you do not hear—that is, the ear does not name or analyze the constituent notes of, for example, the vertical structure in Schoenberg's *Suite* Op. 29. (There might well be new aural capacities in the future, but the most subtle ears do not hear all of Opus 29 yet, beyond the fact of course that there are so many common tones if each chord has 7 or 8 or 9 of them.) But Webern was more and more concerned with this problem in atonal music and his last works are marvels of aural lucidity. This point is crucial—it is hardly ever made—especially now and in the teeth (false) of the mechanical so-called Webernites who do not write to satisfy their own ears and therefore satisfy no one else's: the purity of Webern's spirit is the purity of his ear.

### *Opera 13, 14, 15, 16*

Even the earliest works of Webern resist grouping, but the step from one work to the next is now so great that any grouping would be artificial. Webern would have been a voluminous composer had he written the music in between each opus. But he limited himself to ultimate consequences and to composing the silence not only within a work but between one work and the next. The listener must make a huge effort to follow the progress of the music from now to the end. From here on Webern has out-directioned everyone.

The greater length of the opus 13 songs must have reassured those who might have feared that after opus 11 he would not deign to compose anything but absolute silence. His rhythmic style has developed so far that by opus 13 it is already a new language. Rhythm of all Webernian innovations is the most difficult element for both performer and listener (rhythm is endemically ill-served at present). Webern's

'new language' consists chiefly in using triplets in all combinations and speeds quite as regularly as single and duple units. It is the result of real polyphony, not of the vertical simultaneity of harmonic counterpoint in which all parts move as one, but of the real independence of lines. And from here on there are no contemporary or recent analogous examples; one has to go back to the late 14th century motets.

The Trakl songs Op. 14 mark one of Webern's greatest leaps. The fragmentary style of Op. 13 has been supplanted by 4- and 5-part polyphony of great density, richness, and continuity. The advance in both vocal and instrumental styles has been greater in this one work than ever before—or after. The example of *Pierrot Lunaire* looms, the example of instrumental style and of the use of the strict polyphonic forms—but the example only, the languages are different. (The Schoenberg influence is always evident in Webern's first 10 or 12 years as a composer but it is always contradicted: Webern used the 'strict polyphonic forms' before Schoenberg, in his Opera 1 and 2, used the short piece before Schoenberg, in his Op. 2, etc. Precedence is unimportant, the point is that they were both very close and very independent.)

No. 5, the last of the five sacred songs opus 15, the earliest in date of composition, was finished at the same time as the first Trakl songs of 1917. The first 2 songs of Op. 15 go beyond even the Trakl songs in polyphonic density and subtlety of rhythm. The third song is a march and a pure marvel. The 4th song is more bony and clear in its contrapuntal craftsmanship than any piece so far discussed, and it tends very closely to the canons opus 16. In the 5th song the *Doppelcanon in motu contrario* is distributed between voice and violin and between trumpet and clarinet, but then hands over from instrument to instrument according to the *Klangfarben* idea. Much as I like the Trakl songs, my own line would be drawn between them and those of opus 15 which for me are the first of Webern's incomparable masterpieces.

The last song of op. 15 was Webern's first strict through-composed canon since op. 2. Now, in op. 16, the canon is to come into its own as the Webern form *par excellence*, the form in which—in one of the wonders of the history of music—he was to compose the 'exposition' and 'development' of a symphony. The canons are more spare than the Op. 14 and 15 songs: they are 9, 12, or 13 bars each of the purest contrapuntal music composed in this century. The canons have provoked the observation—because voice and clarinets have the same music—that Webern's vocal music is unvocal. But since none of our singers<sup>2</sup> has ever said the same our only polemic is to offer the performances of Miss Nixon, who sings the songs with piano and the cantatas, and who has perfect pitch, and of Miss Martin who sings the instrumental songs and has relative pitch. (My own experience is that you will never get very much out of Webern until you undertake to sing it yourself: as soon as one gets the habit of singing the intervals one takes much greater pleasure in the music.)

<sup>2</sup> These notes were written for a recording by Columbia of the complete works of Webern which it is hoped will be brought out early in 1956.

It is the same with instruments. So far from being told by the players that things were instrumentally impossible, the guitarist of Op. 18, for example, has commented that the writing is perfectly constructed for the guitar. Let us not confound our musical difficulties with the perfect craftsmanship and conception of the composer, nor confound, as Sydney Smith warned, what we take to be another's want of light with our own want of vision.

### *Op. 17: 12-note music*

Op. 16 had moved close to a row technique. Now Op. 17 uses for the first time Schoenberg's idea of the 12-note row. To the listener who has just heard opera 14, 15, 16 in succession this will mean first of all an entirely new rhythm—to Webern—of repeated notes. All 12 notes had to be sounded in early 12-note practice before any one of them could be sounded a second time, but a note could be repeated immediately. Thus the morse code style of so many early 12-note pieces, or the 'Chinese style' so wonderfully fit for the Chinese cantata Op. 27 of Schoenberg and the Op. 19 of Webern. The Op. 17 songs are a straightforward bit of numerology: the same order of the 12 notes occurs melodically and harmonically in every bar or two. But the great mastery with which Webern handles this new style, and especially the mastery of rhythmic variation, is breathtaking. There is nothing tentative in these beautiful songs; the interlocking of parts—*Stimmtausch*—the wonderfully various use of less variegated intervals than in earlier pieces, the fragmentation, the nudity, together with the harder quality of the sound, the space and the leaps and the rhythmic hardness: these are all marks of Webern's style of later years.

### *Opera 18 and 19: the difficult works*

Webern's 2nd and 3rd 12-note works hardly seem to follow from op. 17. The latter was comparatively spread out and spacious. The interior structures of opera 18 and 19 are so close, so complex polyphonically that it would seem impossible to go further in the same direction (he didn't). Whereas the 1st song of op. 18 uses a single form of the row, the 2nd song adds retrograde and inverted forms and the third uses simultaneously the different forms in the different voices. There is no room to analyze this opus but an analysis and drawing in of the triangles and vectors would show a degree of organization without precedent in the history of music. The op. 18 songs are Webern's zenith style of rhythmic, vocal, and instrumental complexity. There is from the first to the last song a growing ecstasy of sound, and though that word is too apt to be heard at the Théâtre Marigny concerts, I want it to mean an iconoclastic fervour.

Opus 19, though far richer in texture than opus 17—it contains Webern's thickest polyphonic writing—and infinitely more complex otherwise, is rather closer to it than to opus 18. It is even a relief after the intensity of that great summit. Its first song is technically almost more difficult than opus 18 to put in order—semiquavers against triplets—but is much less demanding in concentration. Following this, the



2nd song is the easiest piece Webern had written for 10 years. Also, the singers are conceded to in principle: they are doubled with instrumental pitch—though in the first song the doubling is gratuitous, being offered too late or inaudibly. The instruments are in two groups, celeste and guitar, and violin and two clarinets. In the 1st song each group is distinguished by its own kind of rhythm. The fact that in the 2nd song there is but one kind of rhythm is of great consequence for the future. Webern will now write three 2-movement pieces ruled by contrast rather than by the progress of one idea through 2 movements. And the Webern style of great rhythmic complexity—never again as advanced as in opus 18—will be matched by an extreme simplicity in which there are only one or two kinds of notes and these are sounded on the beats. But then from the rhythmic simplicity of Op. 24 and op. 28 Webern goes on to the new metrical beauty of the 2nd movement of op. 29 and to the chief rhythmic wonder of all, the restoration of renaissance polyphonic rhythm in the chorale of the *Cantata* op. 31.

### *Opus 20: the struggle*

In the *Trio* op. 20 Webern's struggle reaches a solution and in the solution the awareness of the real problem. The forest he had to cross from op. 17 to op. 21 required one of the most dogged quests ever undertaken by a musician: the quest for the form of row music. His first three 12-note works had been short pieces, songs. He had undertaken no purely instrumental piece since the 14 tiny bagatelles for string quartet, for orchestra, and for 'cello 14 years earlier, and no instrumental work of any size in the 20 years since his opus 1. Now with the *Trio* he composed his longest piece since his opus 1 and his first piece in large form.

Schoenberg had begun to apply the technique of 12-note row music to the classical forms of tonality: gigue, gavotte, musette, overture, etc. Schoenberg's phrase structure, motif development, and melodic building in his first 12-note period (1923-30) are still recognizable extensions of the technique of Brahms, and his Brahmsian rhetorical style and affinity with sonata-type development music led him to re-write forms of tonal music with 12-note organization. The use of hexachordal rows and the kind of row transposition which makes for a procedure of harmonic movement imitating that of tonal harmony (the *Cantata* of op. 28, where modulation with 12 notes is brilliantly if mockingly demonstrated), and Schoenberg's habit of transposing at the 5th, the tonal dominant, are techniques intended to effect a restoration of the tonal forms with 12-note atonal means. (On the little slide-rule sheets on which Schoenberg worked out all the orders and transpositions of his rows with common notes marked, the 5th was always written in red ink. The most glaring instance of the tonal dominant is in the first movement of the *Quintet*, where at the end of the exposition it is left as a melodic dominant without harmony). Of course there is very much more to the Schoenberg evolution and process than this, but the point to be made is: the Schoenberg example before Webern was of the application of rows to the forms of tonality. Schoenberg in all other respects than his harmonic

language was still not so far away from the tonal masters from Beethoven to Brahms that he could not hope to create their kind of form with his recognizably traditional rhythm, melodic construction, and phrase design. Harmonically he hoped to create their kind of form through the unity he imagined the row to give, through the harmonic movement of block transpositions, and even through 'tonal' passages composed with 12 notes (the theme of op. 29, 3rd movement).

Webern's language in its every manifestation had been so radically changed that there was no possibility of his achieving half-hour 4-movement sonata form. Webern's monosyllables determined instead a very different and indigenously 12-note form: total variation.

But Webern in what must have been a stormy intumescence did write his one great compromise work, his last compromise to a Schoenberg example. He also attempted 12-note tonal form, but though the outline of development sections and transitional passages and recapitulations is very clear in the *Trio*, he is at the same time far in advance of this scheme in the invention of the smaller cells and units and in his technique of varying them. In the second movement, he combines the style of intricate richness of op. 18 with the clearer and more simple style that is to become characteristic in the next works. He invents the slow first- and fast 2nd-movement which he will use in the *Symphony* and *Quartet*. Moreover, in the 1st movement he does achieve a breadth and a grandeur and real sense of working-out of motifs, and a middle section and climax and ending. Also, the *ritornelli* do achieve their function as *ritornelli*. The 2nd movement is the most difficult in all Webern to encompass with one's ears from beginning to end—but its incredible riches can be taken in with practice and patience and with accurate and mature performance.

### *Opera 21 and 22*

The storm over, repose comes in its wake. I will not offer analyses nor would I have the reader take any analysis whatever for an explanation. The ear's logic must be satisfied first. Both halves of the 1st movements of opera 21 and 22 are repeated and in no music composed since the classic masters has the perfect necessity of the repeat been so wonderfully calculated. From the *Symphony* one sees the repeat of the exposition section of the *Trio*'s 2nd movement as of astounding significance. Here is Webern writing small sonata-breadth pieces with expositions, developments, recapitulations, codas, and with his only material the purest of contrapuntal forms, the canon.

### *Opera 23 and 25*

Leibowitz's essay, *The tragic art of Anton Webern* (*Horizon*, May, 1947), argues that Webern was himself the enactor of a tragic rôle and that his music is tragic in the sense that it is composed in the strict contrapuntal forms. Webern of course always did set himself the most pre-ordained problems. However, the opposite of a tragic composer would be a lyrical one, and here Leibowitz's thesis must be questioned. Webern's tragic works were given relief by a very rare and very delicate lyrical

inspiration. Many of the songs are definitely lyrical and none more than these last six. (Slightly more than half of Webern's music is vocal and songs account for at least one third of his total work.) These last songs are all the more beautiful for having survived like rare flowers high on a very hard mountain.

### *Opus 24*

The Concerto op. 24 has been the most analyzed of all Webern's works. One rather gets the impression from the authors of these studies—Leibowitz, Stockhausen—that it was written for their analytical purpose. But an analysis is so easy to do and so obvious that it doesn't seem worth doing. And if one uses it to demonstrate the technique of 12-note composition, as Leibowitz does, that too seems useless. It will merely show what Webern has done in this particular piece and not what another may do, for as Amiel wrote: 'the frightful thing about this existence is that, since we are deprived of acquired experience and former practice by each new case, we do not know what to do'. What in fact is so remarkable about Webern in each of these works from the *Trio* on, is precisely that each one is a different kind of unexceedable end.

### *The Bach Ricercar*

The great difficulty in performing Webern's instrumentation of the 6-part *ricercar* from the *Musical Offering* is that every player in the orchestra must be aware of his connecting function in the whole. Each player is like a relay runner in a controlled race and he must know not only his own exits and entrances, but the master plan as well. Webern's *Klangfarben* insectation of Bach's subject is of course a legitimate compositional procedure; it is of no moment whether Bach would have written it for instruments in that way, and in any case a reconstruction of what Bach might have done is a proposition of interest to a lesser man than Webern.

Like any analysis into smaller elements it both simplifies and complicates. Webern directs attention to the structure of the subject into 5, 4, 3-note units with but one strong accent and that precisely on the middle note (the 10th, with 9 before and 9 after, counting the notes as though they formed a row). Given the consistently asymmetrical relay of the sound the possibilities of the idea are mathematically terrifying. As Webern realized it, however, it is easily followed. For those who like to look while they listen it is more interesting at first to follow the music in an open piano score than in Webern's orchestral score. It is perhaps even more difficult to follow the *Klangfarben* style in this familiar music, but no one could deny that Webern makes the *ricercar* seem congenitally disposed to it.

### *Opera 27, 28, 30*

With the last three instrumental works, Webern's quest for the ultimate polyphonic purity has been realized. This is the most ruthlessly fundamental music of all. Everything is variation and every musical idea is expressed with ruthless economy: there are only two kinds of interval in op. 30 and only 3 kinds in op. 28, and there are palindromes and other deliberate row delimitations as well. On May 3rd, 1941, Webern wrote to Willi Reich on the subject of his orchestral variations (they are



dedicated to the late Werner Reinhart of Winterthur, to which city Webern journeyed to hear them under Scherchen in 1943, the last public performance of any of his music he was to hear, and the 1st work of his he had heard since the 5 years of Nazi ban, an insufferable situation for a great composer and especially so for one who had always worked in the reality of sound in performance): 'Isn't it true that when you first see this score you want to say "well, what is in it?—nothing". This is because you do not see the multitudes of notes which most music has accustomed you to see. Evidently then my score has another style. Yes, but what kind? I suppose . . . a new kind.'

#### *Opera 26, 29, 31*

In the three great choral pantheons Webern's quest for euphony has been attained: in *Das Augenlicht* where space and silence are intersected by a canon begun by softly trilling timpani and mandoline, in the cantatas opera 29 and 31 where Webern gives his love of nature expression in his most luxuriant sound. The tragic rôle is the chorus's. It carries on a dialogue with a nature goddess—the 3rd movement of the 1st cantata, the 5th movement of the 2nd cantata—even dances with her in the 3rd movement of the 2nd cantata. Beauty of sound is all that concerns Webern now; structure has been translated to sound and has disappeared in the process like a discarded scaffold. Webern wrote again to Willi Reich, February 23rd, 1944: 'To quote freely from Holderlin: "to live—that is to defend a form". I tell you this gladly. This poet has been occupying my attention intensely for a considerable time. Imagine what an impression it made on me when this passage occurred in the notes to the *Oedipus* translation: "other works of art lack reliability, as compared with those of the Greeks. They have, at least up to now, been judged more by the impression they convey than by the artistic considerations and other methods through which their beauty is created." Do I still need to tell you why this passage moved me so much?'

### LIST OF WEBERN'S WORKS, WITH TIMINGS

<i>Passacaglia</i> Op. 1 for orchestra of winds and brass in threes, plus 4 horns, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp, strings (1908).	14 min.
<i>Entflieht auf Leichten Kähnen</i> , a cappella mixed chorus Op. 2 (1908).	2 min. 28 sec.
<i>Five Songs</i> Op. 3 for soprano and piano (1909).	4 min.
<i>Five Songs</i> Op. 4 for soprano and piano (1909).	7 min. 50 sec.
<i>Five Pieces</i> for string quartet Op. 5 (1909, later arranged for string orchestra, 1930).	10 min.
<i>Six Pieces</i> for orchestra Op. 6, for timpani, percussion, 2 harps, celeste, 6 horns, 6 trumpets, 6 trombones, tuba, 4 flutes, 4 oboes, 5 clarinets, 3 bassoons (1 fl. doubles alto fl.) (1910).	8 min. 30 sec.
<i>Four Pieces</i> for violin and piano Op. 7 (1910).	4 min. 12 sec.
<i>Two Songs</i> Op. 8 with clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, trombone, celeste, harp, violin, viola, 'cello (1910).	1 min. 45 sec.
<i>Six Bagatelles</i> for string quartet Op. 9 (1913).	3 min. 37 sec.
<i>Five Pieces</i> for orchestra Op. 10, for solo violin, viola, 'cello, bass; guitar, mandoline, kunstharmonium, celeste, harp, bells, cowbells, drums, cymbals, triangle, xylophone, glockenspiel, flute, piccolo clarinet, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, horn (1913).	4 min. 5 sec.
<i>Three Pieces</i> for 'cello and piano Op. 11 (1914).	2 min. 2 sec.
<i>Four Songs</i> Op. 12 for soprano and piano (1915-17).	4 min. 15 sec.
<i>Four Songs</i> Op. 13 with flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, celeste, harp, glockenspiel, violin, viola, 'cello, bass (1914-18).	5 min. 32 sec.

<i>Six Songs</i> Op. 14 with clarinet, piccolo clarinet, bass clarinet, viola, 'cello (1917-21)	7 min. 28 sec.
<i>Five Sacred Songs</i> Op. 15 with harp, trombone, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, violin, viola (1917-22).	4 min. 42 sec.
<i>Five Canons</i> Op. 16 with clarinet, bass clarinet (1924).	2 min. 40 sec.
<i>Three Folk Texts</i> Op. 17 with violin, viola, clarinet, bass clarinet (1924)	2 min. 12 sec.
<i>Three Songs</i> Op. 18 with piccolo clarinet, guitar (1925).	3 min. 19 sec.
<i>Two Songs</i> Op. 19, for solo quartet of voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and celeste, clarinet, bass clarinet (1926).	1 min. 52 sec.
<i>Trio</i> Op. 20 for violin, viola, 'cello (1927).	8 min. 16 sec.
<i>Symphony</i> Op. 21 for harp, violins, violas, 'cellos, clarinet, bass clarinet (1928).	9 min.
<i>Quartet</i> Op. 22 for tenor saxophone, clarinet, violin, piano (1930).	5 min.
<i>Three Songs</i> Op. 23 for soprano and piano (1934).	6 min.
<i>Concerto</i> Op. 24 for flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, horn, violin, viola, piano (1934).	6 min.
<i>Three Songs</i> Op. 25 for soprano and piano (1935).	3 min. 18 sec.
<i>Orchestration of Bach's 'Ricercar'</i> for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, timpani, harp, string quintet (1935).	7 min. 20 sec.
<i>Das Augenlicht</i> Op. 26 for mixed chorus, mandoline, harp, celeste, timpani, glockenspiel, cymbal, 8 violins, 4 violas, 4 'cellos, trumpet, trombone, horn, flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, xylophone (1935).	4 min. 30 sec.
<i>Variations</i> for piano Op. 27 (1936)	5 min. 10 sec.
<i>String Quartet</i> Op. 28 (1938).	7 min. 40 sec.
<i>Cantata</i> Op. 29 for soprano solo, mixed chorus, violins, violas, 'cellos, mandoline, harp celeste, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, trumpet, trombone, horn, timpani, cymbals, bass drum, glockenspiel, triangle, tam-tam (1939).	6 min. 45 sec.
<i>Variations</i> Op. 30 for orchestra of flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, celeste, harp, string quartet (1940).	6 min. 30 sec.
<i>Cantata</i> Op. 31 for bass solo, soprano solo, female chorus, mixed chorus, and orchestra of strings (quintet), piccolo, flute, oboe, English horn, alto saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, harp, celeste, chimes, glockenspiel (1943).	10 min. 30 sec.

This list does not include all the music Webern ever composed. There are other arrangements than that of the Bach *Ricercar*, but they belong far more to their composers—Schubert, Johann Strauss, and Schoenberg—than to Webern.

There is also an early *Quintet* (1907) for piano, 2 violins, viola and 'cello. It is an interesting piece but bears more evidence of the pedagogy of Schoenberg than of the Webern already so pronounced in the Opus 1 of a year later. Webern did not include it in the catalogue of his works.

The existence of an Op. 32, if perhaps in fragments, has been claimed by several writers, but we have the assurance of family, friends and publishers that no such work or fragments exist. Still, something may yet turn up; Webern at the height of his faculties had two full years, 1943-45, and it is hardly possible that he was idle.

A number of French books deifying Webern have recently appeared, but they add nothing to Leibowitz's and rather detract by non-technical and arrogant polemics. They also try to substitute Debussy for Schoenberg. Now Webern's and Debussy's sonorous worlds may overlap for a bar or two of *pianissimo* harp music but there is no shared structural principle and no evolutionary case can be made out for a Debussy headed towards atonality or polyphony or any other Webern territory. The authors of such books—Hodeir, Goléa—might better have discussed such valuable questions as Webern's mediaeval and renaissance antecedents, or even such an important small question as his cross-hand piano style.

Webern has also been apostolized as a father of concrete music (as if there were any other kind). Perhaps, but the point must be made that Webern is only rarely the composer of non-well-tempered sounds: percussion makes the rarest appearance in his music. Only eight of his scores employ any, and three of these use tuned instruments, timpani or bells. The early orchestral pieces are the only ones which use much percussion and they are all very far from the idea of *musique concrète*.

But the question of the bass indicates more strongly than anything else Webern's attitude to the ear. He tended more and more to limit himself to the ranges where pitch is clearest, the range of the 'cello rather than that of the bass. There is no double bass in the *Symphony* or in the *Cantatas* Op. 26 and 29; nor in Op. 31, except in the first movement. The *Piano Variations* use less than a 5-octave range and the *Concerto* Op. 24 exceeds five octaves by only a semitone.

## DIE REIHE

### *and Electronic Music*

In Anton Webern's works the increasing density of formal relationships corresponds to an always increasing rarification of the musical materials themselves. Webern seemed indeed to have reached an extreme limit in isolating the single sound, and in connecting in structural relationships every element of a musical work. But in reality this was not so. He had not organized every aspect that it was possible to organize from a serial point of view. Nor does the isolated sound represent the last element, the atom, of musical substance. In Webern the twelve-note structures concern essentially the sounds only in their pitch relationships, without affecting the other dimensions of the musical image. The serial technique could in fact be applied also to the rhythmic elements, to timbre, and even to dynamics. And this is what the younger generation is doing. As regards the statement that the isolated sound does not represent the last indivisible element of musical matter, it must be understood that we are here talking about the sounds produced by traditional musical instruments. All these sounds, as well as those of the human voice, are not pure sounds in the strict sense of the term, but contain in themselves all the various overtones produced by the breaking up of the sinusoidal curve that represents the principal nucleus of each instrumental sound. The absolutely pure sound must be without any overtones and must therefore be represented by a perfect sinusoidal curve. Such a sine-tone cannot be reproduced by ordinary instruments. It can be produced only by electronic means. With these means it is possible to realize with absolute precision, and in any dimension, serial music of such complexity that it becomes too difficult to perform on any instrument played by a human being. (As can be seen in certain piano pieces by Stockhausen.)

If we believe that the evolution of music cannot come to a full stop, then it is at present only through electronic means that we can progress further than Webern. It is in fact historical providence, from this point of view, that at just this moment the possibilities are at hand. Electronic music was anticipated by various inventions such as the Ondes Martenot and the Trautonium. It differs, however, from other methods of electronic sound-production through the essential fact that electronic generators imprint the sound directly on to the magnetic tape, and thus eliminate the performer who had always been necessary from the earliest origins of music to the Trautonium.

The earliest examples of electronic music were elaborated in the radio station of Cologne under the direction of Herbert Eimert, and were first presented to the public on October 19th, 1954. There were seven pieces lasting in all only 28 minutes; two *Studies* by Stockhausen, *Glockenspiel* and a *Study in tone mixtures* by Herbert Eimert, *Seismogramme* by Henri Pousseur, *Composition No. 5* by Goeyvaerts and *Formanten 1 and 2* by Paul Gredinger. Since then, additional pieces have been composed by Boulez, Klebe and König. It is clear that such music cannot be printed in the normal way, but only noted on graph paper on which can be indicated the co-ordination of time values and Herz frequencies. The diffusion of electronic works can only take place through radio microphones (and for the moment the radio is the natural medium for such music), or through the gramophone. A music publisher who wants to print electronic music must turn his firm into a gramophone company, and in fact the Universal Edition (which seems determined to continue the *avant-garde* tradition inaugurated by Dr. Hertzka) has already announced a gramophone record of the above-mentioned compositions by Stockhausen and Eimert. Meanwhile the same publishers have issued the first number of a series of booklets called *Die Reihe*, which will be devoted to problems concerning serial music. The second number, appearing this month, will be dedicated to Anton Webern in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of his death, and a later issue will be devoted to Debussy, in whose music Boulez and the others pretend to find some correspondences to their own conceptions. The whole first number is dedicated to electronic music, considered as the most significant phenomenon of post-serial music: that is, music in which the elements of sound transcend our tempered system based on the twelve notes of the chromatic scale. In this way, too, twelve-note music is superseded and all that remains is the principle of serial organization. So when we speak about serial music we must be clear whether we are speaking of a serial music based on less than twelve notes, or a serial



music based on the twelve notes of the tempered scale, or a serial music containing more than twelve notes and including also all kinds of different intervals not included in the tempered scale: that is, micro-intervals and intervals that can be related to non-tempered scales—pure sounds and synthetic sounds produced by electronic valves. Electronic serial music would be unthinkable without the previous experience of twelve-note writing, and particularly without the extremes to which Webern took it, but it does not represent simply an enlargement and development of the twelve-note method, because, as we said, the actual sound material has been radically changed. This concept is explained in an article on the seven pieces by Herbert Eimert, the editor of *Die Reihe*. Most of the other articles are written by the composers already mentioned. They describe the results of the first experiments in this new world of sound. Particularly interesting and significant seems Pierre Boulez's article, whose title *An der Grenze des Fruchtlands* refers to a painting by Paul Klee. Boulez, whose extremism I have attacked in the past (and I was particularly affronted by his irreverent article on Schoenberg published in *The Score* of May, 1952) shows on this occasion that he has reached a more mature judgment that permits him not only to see the enormous possibilities of electronic music but also to be aware of its many dangers. The greatest of such dangers is that of a complete mechanization of music in which the performer is totally eliminated. Boulez says that 'the disappearance of the interpreter also involves further consequences concerning the most fundamental quality of a work. The machine has enormous capacities but its skill is very small when compared with that of the interpreter—the precision that can be measured, against the imponderables that cannot be defined in notation'. 'Above all', he goes on, 'we have the essential question of tempo related to a machine or, on the other hand, to an interpreter. I would say that what is exactly measurable has only a limited effect when compared with that which is imponderable and so surpasses the limits of anything that can be determined. We are interested much more by the possibilities given by the fantasy and inspiration of the human interpreter, than by precise mechanical realization. There would be no need to worry about the disappearance of the human interpreter if this disappearance did not mean doing away with the miraculous nature of music. Will the powers of the mechanized machine limit the freedom of the composer? Would it be possible to imagine a synthesis in which the contradiction between the two worlds of sound became a free interplay, resulting in an enlargement of *living* structures?'

Continuing on the same lines, Boulez, who until a short while ago postulated a clear separation between the serial world and the traditional musical world, now recognizes the necessity of ensuring the continuity of tradition through a dialectical synthesis of the past and present. The two articles by Werner Meyer-Eppeler and Gottfried Michael König are concerned with specific technological problems of electronic music. A new terminology becomes necessary. The technicians—in the new practice of electronic music the composers too must turn into experts in physics and acoustics—divide the material of electronic music into five categories. The tone is defined as a sine-tone; that is, as a pure element from an acoustical point of view. The sound (*Klang*) corresponds very nearly with what we call, in traditional music, a tone—that is to say, the sine-tone with overtones. In place of the classical conception of the chord is substituted the agglomeration of sine-tones. Noise is defined, as before, as an amorphous sound. The fifth category concerns the sounds that cannot be derived from, or organized into, scales, whether natural or artificial. The aesthetic problems raised by electronic music are discussed by a composer of the older generation, Ernst Krenek, from the point of view of the classical twelve-note method. Finally there is an article by the Berlin critic, H. H. Stuckenschmidt, who speaks about the historical and metaphysical implications of the new medium.

There is no space here to discuss the value of his statements or to criticize many of the sentences in other articles that seem of doubtful validity. We will only say that the impression made by the seven pieces of electronic music mentioned above (when we had an opportunity to hear them) was quite different from what the articles in *Die Reihe* had led us to expect. We thought we would hear something that human ears had never experienced before, and that these new sounds would be highly differentiated in quality. After listening for a few minutes, all these marvels of sound seemed boring because there was a common denominator in the *timbre* which reminded us of the unauthentic sonorities of the Hammond organ. We will not assume because of our disappointment, that it is quite impossible to obtain uncommon sounds in electronic music and that its formal possibilities are limited. We don't think so. It is obvious that these seven pieces represent only the first stage in the discovery of a world whose limits it is impossible to foresee. The exploration of this new world will demand much time and effort from the creative imagination of composers. We await with great interest the result of these experiments and hope that they will establish the spiritual sovereignty of man in the musical territory that is now being conquered. For the danger is always that man will lose his freedom and will become slave to the machine which he has created with his own hands.

ROMAN VLAD

## BUSONI AND MOZART

*Ronald Stevenson*

Writing in these pages in December 1954, Professor Jacques Barzun said: 'Within living memory Mozart has turned from a gay, superficial composer to a profound and tragic one.' Now there are reasons for such a transformation, and men behind it. Professor Dent, in his Henriette Hertz Trust Lecture delivered to the British Academy in 1953, traced the modern cult for Mozart back to the Munich revivals of the operas in 1896, some of which the young Richard Strauss conducted. About the same time, in Britain, another young man who was one day to become the doyen theoretician of music in Great Britain, Donald Francis Tovey, was saying strange new things about Mozart, such as that his concerto-form fundamentally derived from the operatic aria. Before all this, however, Köchel had laid in 1862 the foundations of present-day Mozart scholarship with his monumental *Verzeichnis*, later revised by Waldersee in 1905 and again in 1937 by Einstein, who thus prepared himself for his masterly Mozart Biography, to which we are all indebted. Another prodigious revisor was Hermann Abert, who essayed a complete restoration of Jahn's standard biography, which virtually took on the form of a new work in the two volumes issued in 1921. Rather later than Köchel, the French scholars MM. de Wyzewa and Saint-Foix published the first volume of their own independent catalogue in 1912, a protracted Herculean labour which only terminated as recently as 1946, after the architect of the work, de Wyzewa, had died and Saint-Foix had been left to complete it without the wise counsel of his collaborator. There have been pianists too who have specialized in Mozart: one of the finest of these was Raoul Pugno, the Frenchman, who always used to play 'with the notes', appearing like some huge beneficent Saint Nicholas with his great wintery beard and melting his audiences with a delicacy truly amazing in such a giant of a man; more recently the Swiss pianist, Edwin Fischer, has done excellent propaganda for the Mozartian cause. Richard Strauss and Sir Donald Tovey repeatedly took up the baton for Mozart and laid it down only to take up the pen, which both of them wielded just as dexterously. Britain has not been behind in its appreciation of Mozart. Besides Tovey, we have had Professor Dent's scholarly book on the Operas (1913, revised 1947); Emily Anderson's superlative three-volume translation of the Letters (1938—strange that their most masculine, not to say Rabelaisian, humour had to wait so long for a woman to translate it!); and Mr. Girdlestone's enlightening volume on the Piano Concertos (1948). Nor must we forget that most excellent and quixotic modern knight, Sir Thomas Beecham, who still goes on (and long may he!) re-

creating for us, in these most ungallant days, the delectable illusion of courtly Mozartian *galanterie* with the neat sword-work of his baton.

But in this *coup d'oeil* at the 'Mozart renaissance' of the past century or so, we have not accounted for one significant figure, Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924). In a specialized field, other musicians have contributed more towards the new appreciation of Mozart: Tovey was a more practised theoretician; Strauss a more experienced conductor; Einstein an infinitely more informed scholar. Yet none of these outstripped Busoni in sheer devotion to the master, and none could match the versatility of his gifts, which enabled him to disseminate in so many ways an appreciation of Mozart's work. Gradually, we are realizing (what has for so long been doubted) that Busoni's true significance is as a composer. Even there, Mozart influenced him, particularly in the late compositions. Closely allied to these original works, indeed in a sense indissoluble from them, are his transcriptions and revisions, in which the music of Mozart occupies an important position. And closely linked with the transcriptions was his magnificent pianism, which is so well-known and yet which can still surprise and edify in descriptions of eye-witnesses. Towards the end of his career, he had quiet ambitions as a conductor, and in this sphere too rendered Mozart a valuable service (though reliable descriptions of his conducting are difficult to find.) Informing all these musical activities of Busoni was a degree and quality of philosophy rare in a musician. All his life, he was temperamentally what the Germans call *ein Grübler*, a man who worries his way through problems, as did Leonardo da Vinci, whose self-portrait in red chalk Goethe described as 'the face of a man who has burnt himself out by thought'. Busoni's intellectual pilgrimage may be traced literally in the lines of his face in various photographs, from the ones of the almost morbidly beautiful Italian boy to the Pre-Raphaelite Germanic *Christus-Kopf* of the young man, on to the enigmatic and dramatic mask (rather than face) of the old man of only 57; a mask which has all but annihilated the dual racial unconscious that slumbered within him and has assumed a large universality sometimes reminiscent of some wise, silent Red Indian chief, at other times recalling an ancient sage of Old China.<sup>1</sup> This preoccupation with philosophy was brought to bear on the whole history of Occidental music and also reached out to the Oriental, even to the unknown Future and to the Age of Electronic Music. And, naturally, among all these interests, it came to focus on that figure who, in a sense, is the most incredible phenomenon of Western music, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Fascinating, intriguing are the relationships between Mozart and Busoni: both infant prodigies; both great humorists and letter-writers with a decided talent for caricature; both composer-pianists; both achieving their best work in the operatic and piano concerto forms; the one German,<sup>2</sup> who found his spiritual home in Italy—the other Italian, who found his spiritual home in Germany; the one a seeker, the

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally two nations in which he was deeply interested: see his *Indian Diary* for piano and his opera *Turandot* (written before Puccini's).

<sup>2</sup> Properly Austrian.



other a finder. Surely these comparisons and contrasts cannot have evaded Busoni as he wrote down his thoughts on Mozart.<sup>3</sup>

The most important of these writings are the *Aphorisms* which he published on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the master's birth in January, 1906, incidentally the year which saw the first edition of Busoni's *Neue Aesthetik der Tonkunst*. Dr. Hugo Leichtentritt, Busoni's first biographer has said, very rightly, that each of these highly concentrated aphorisms could be expanded into a whole chapter. There are as many of these pithy sayings as there were years in Mozart's life: 35. Those years were tragically short and crammed with an unbelievable amount of creation; so are these sayings of Busoni's brief but pregnant. I give them in my own translation from the German:

'He is till now the most perfect example of musical talent.

The pure musician looks up to him, gladdened and disarmed.

His short life and his productivity raise his achievement to the sphere of phenomena.

His never-clouded beauty irritates.

His feeling for form is almost superhuman.

His art is like a sculptor's masterpiece—seen from every side—a finished model.

He has the instinct of the animal, who sets himself a task—as far as the utmost boundary, but not beyond—corresponding to his powers.

He risks nothing fool-hardy.

He finds, without seeking, and seeks not what were undiscoverable—(perhaps even undiscoverable to himself).

He possesses extraordinarily rich means, but he is never prodigal.

He can say very much, but he never says too much.

He is passionate, but the form remains *galant*.

He bears all characters within himself, but only as representative and portraitist.

He gives the solution with the riddle.

His judgement is astonishingly right, but it is meted out and reckoned up again.

He has light and shade at his disposal; but his light does not blind and his darkness still shows a definite outline.

In the most tragic situation he still has a joke ready—in the most light-hearted he can frown philosophically.

<sup>3</sup> Busoni shared with Mozart the honour of receiving, as a boy, the diploma of the Bologna *Accademia Filarmonica*.

Through his versatility he is universal.

He can keep on drawing from every glass because he never once has drunk to the dregs.

He stands so high that he sees further than anyone and therefore sees everything rather diminished.

His palace is immeasurably large, but he never steps outside its walls.

Through its window he sees Nature; the window frame is its boundary also.

Serene merriment is his most salient characteristic: he disarms even the disagreeable with a smile.

His smile is not that of a diplomat or an actor, but that of a pure soul—and yet worldly-wise.

His character is not innocent out of ignorance.

He does not remain unassuming, yet does not become affected.

He is temperamental without any nervousness—idealist without becoming vague, realist without ugliness.

He is burgher as well as aristocrat; but never peasant or agitator.

He is a friend of order: miracle and devilry last their 16 and 32 bars.

He is religious, as far as religion is identifiable with harmony.

In him the Antique and Rococo are united in perfect fashion, yet without a new architecture resulting.

The architectonic is the most nearly related to his art.

He is not daemonic and not over-sensuous; his kingdom is of this world.

He is the perfect and rounded figure, the sum total, an end not a beginning.

He is young as a youth and wise as an old man—never ancient and never modern, has been carried to the grave, yet lives still. His transfigured human smile still radiates to us . . .'

In his essay *Ueber die Möglichkeiten der Oper* (*On the Possibilities of Opera*) Busoni pursues his conception of *die Einheit der Musik* (the Unity of Music). He claims that such terms as 'church music', 'theatre music', 'chamber music', are no more than expedient clichés and can only obscure our view of music as a *whole* and obstruct our understanding of the nature of music itself. He says that:

'with Mozart every opera is a pure symphonic score, every quartet has something from an opera-scene'.

The Mozart operas and piano concertos particularly engaged his attention. As the librettist of his own operas, Busoni extended his interest also to Mozart's librettos, on one occasion entering the fray with a brilliant defence of them:

'The Germans (although having the greatest hero-worship for their geniuses, with whom they easily become familiar) deny the excellence of the Mozartian librettos; they speak of the "poor" text-books; although:

1. the infallibly artistic selection-instinct of Mozart remains indisputable;
2. the characters of his works have become alive, without ageing;
3. quotations from the operas are proverbial;
4. the three types: drama, comedy, symbolic action with him are definitively established;
5. although Goethe shows his estimate of the *Zauberflöte* as poetry by writing a continuation to it;

6. although theatre-directors themselves fight shy of producing the originals of the Mozart plots as spoken dramas, including such literary and dramatic masterpieces as Tirso de Molina's *Don Juan Tenorio* (*El burlador de Sevilla*), Beaumarchais' *La folle journée* (*Le mariage de Figaro*).

In spite of all this, the Mozart librettos go on defying all that German art-aestheticians, critics and historians say against them. Grillparzer already upbraided them in 1822:

'If the script of the opera *Don Juan*, which Mozart set, has been taken directly, as who can doubt, from Moliere's *Festin de pierre*, one cannot give enough praise to the art of the librettist and his knowledge of what belongs to opera and to his deep insight into the nature of music. The arrangement of the book is a model for anything of its type, and Kind would have done better if he had taken it as a model for his *Freischütz*.'

Busoni's concept of the unity of music led him on to the lone heights of metaphysics, which begin to come into view in his ultimate essay *Vom Wesen der Musik* (*On the Nature of Music*). In these pages, the last he ever penned, he once more spoke of Mozart:

'When we listen (in deepest reverence and highest admiration) to a movement by that demi-god Mozart (one of those rare minds who came near to expressing the very essence of music), we must confess, all the same, that he fell short of expressing the innermost spirit of music in the following ways:

1. We perceive unhesitatingly the *ethos* from which his music springs, its relation to the then-prevailing social and historical conditions;
2. the master's selectiveness; what he favours and what he rejects; what lies within his personality;
3. the frequent repetitions and emphasis of his preferred thought-patterns.

What nature gave him so liberally for his own, is in these three ways lessened and limited by personal colouring.'



We must not assume from this that Busoni was losing interest in Mozart. Rather was he reaching an objectivity which viewed even the finest musical creations as only a fraction of that continuum MUSIC from which they are derived.

The interest in Mozart which first made itself felt in the writings of Busoni in 1906, reached its floodtide during World War I, when he was voluntarily exiled from both Italy and Germany and lived in Zürich. The resident conductor of the Zürich Municipal Orchestra, Dr. Volkmar Andreae, was conscripted to military service in 1916, where he held the rank of colonel, and he proposed Busoni as his successor. The proposal was accepted, and then, on Andreae's dispatchment for duties, a lengthy correspondence between him and Busoni ensued, which continued when Busoni returned to Berlin at the end of the war. In this correspondence which I was recently privileged to see through the kindness of Dr. Andreae, there are many references to Mozart.

In conversation with Dr. Andreae, I questioned him as to the quality of Busoni's conducting. His opinion—that of a man of over 40 years' experience in conducting—was that Busoni's conducting was masterly and not sufficiently appreciated because of his utter disdain of 'rostrum thaumaturgy'. In Italy particularly his unaffected manner as conductor was something of a disappointment to audiences who, through their national temperament, expect a display of gesture as a matter of course. While in Rome recently, I was able to question other musicians about Busoni's conducting. Maestro Ildebrando Pizzetti told me that he once heard Mozart's G minor Symphony under Busoni and never heard the opening so celestially played; 'but', he added, 'the first few minutes were heaven and the rest of it hell!' This would appear to hint that Busoni, in common with some other composers, notably Schumann, became on the rostrum too absorbed in abstract reading of the music, and, as a result, forgetful of the constant necessity of directing the musicians. Again, Maestro Mario Corti (a fervent Busonian) told me how strange it was that Busoni, 'who could sit down at the piano and play almost anything from memory, could not conduct a bar of his own music without a score!'

However, whatever the virtues or failings of Busoni's conducting, from the inception of his new responsibilities as director of the orchestral concerts in Zürich, we become aware of his almost missionary sense on behalf of Mozart. In a letter to Dr. Andreae, he voices his impatience with programme-builders whose one article of faith is to do what has been done before.

'Zürich, October 7th, 1917.

... On the whole, Mozart is still *terra incognita*: for who knows and who plays his 650 works?—whereas one doesn't miss one semiquaver of a certain Dr. Johannes, whether it is for *clarinetto* or *contrafagotto*! . . .'

In these letters we see Busoni trying out unfamiliar works of Mozart, always exploring in hope of unearthing a masterpiece, a little disappointed when he fails

to find it, but always hopeful and always glad for what he does know and has cherished for a life-time:

‘Zürich, October 3rd, 1917.

... I have with me 3 Mozart Concertos which I have been through and found that the D minor remains the most important. . . .’

‘Zürich, June 30th, 1919.

... I have the Mozart Concertos at home and have worked through the whole series. I decided for the E flat Concerto, with special regard to the extraordinarily beautiful and rich *Andante* in C minor; in consideration would also come the C major which Mlle. Güller played, and the so-called *Coronation Concerto*. The Concerto in B flat is important in the structure and, peculiarly, is never played. You choose . . .’

In the same letter, it is rather moving to find Busoni, the mature and acknowledged master, being disarmed by the boyhood compositions of Mozart:

‘. . . The first four Concertos have with one swoop established the present-day form and constitution of the *genre*. They were written at—11 years of age! If one sees that, one can’t help but beat a retreat before such a prodigious display of talent.’

This shows Busoni unaware of (or oblivious to) the fact, previously established by Saint-Foix and de Wyzewa in 1912, that these ‘first concertos of Mozart’ are largely transcriptions from such composers as Schobert and Raupach. But if one reads the two French scholars on these works, one learns that the eleven-year-old Mozart did not merely copy Raupach and Schobert but inserted *tutti* here and there, added imitations, and in the solo part made new comments on these additions, so that the works were no longer merely sonata movements but concertos; in fact, as Busoni states, the first instances of the modern concerto in embryonic form. That this new form evolved through the art of transcription would particularly appeal to Busoni, for whom transcription was a legitimate part of the craft of composition proper. One could even make bold to extend the implications of Busoni’s remark back to the clavier concertos of Bach, many of which were also transcriptions (from Vivaldi)—a fact which is now often forgotten—were it not that these older works look backward to the concerto-grosso form, in which the solo part merges into the orchestral more than in the modern piano concerto.

There is always something exciting about a première and, in a way, perhaps more exciting still when it is a work by a composer of another century:

‘Berlin, May 28th, 1922.

... I like to play the G major Concerto of Mozart (which I presented this winter as the very first Berlin performance!) . . .’

Then at that point, Busoni, so full of Mozart, pauses a moment and thinks of his other idol, Bach; and now we see that it is the *Well-tempered Clavier*, and not

the longer orchestral works (including the clavier concertos) which retain their greatness for Busoni:

'... To give Bach so much *en masse* leaves me a bit anxious. All line, no colour, few contrasts ...'

Those last few words, conveying so much, like casual strokes of an artist's pencil, may well indicate what it was which appealed to Busoni in the Mozart Concertos: colour and contrast: and, of course, remembering his words about Mozart's first essays in the *genre*, the form—always the form. Then, as the Mozart cult spread, Busoni, who always wished to preserve the sacredness of art and was quite opposed to democracy vulgarising it under the labels of 'education' or 'appreciation', had some grave misgivings:

'Berlin, May 26th, 1922.

... Now one begins to become familiar with Mozart, which upsets me ...'

A Berlin performance of *Così fan tutte* in 1922 aroused almost youthful enthusiasm in the same letter:

'... It is a great pity that you could not have had in Zürich the excellent performance of *Così fan tutte* which was given here. (Especially with Leo Blech.)'

He had referred to this in another letter, beaming with satisfaction over the infiltration of Mozart into opera-house and concert-hall:

'Berlin, January 16th, 1922.

... The Mozart cult gradually increases here, and Wagner's realm slowly becomes less significant. We had here a fine performance of *Così fan tutte*. I played six concertos in two evenings, for days the *Zauberflöte* has been in production and Edwin Fischer is playing a—Bach-Mozart programme!'

But, amid all this activity, he has time to reflect and bring out some incredibly original and provocative ideas on the life and character of Mozart (still in the same letter):

'I startled Herr X the other day, I'm afraid, because I put forward my presumption that Mozart had rather a bad time of it during his life: Beethoven, on the contrary, having it comparatively easy. For Mozart had enough opportunity to get rid of his chagrin in everyday life, so that only his serenity was left for art (significantly shadowed here and there by an accent of pain); whereas it was the daemon of the happier Beethoven which drove him to turn his bad temper into music. This last is said rather superficially; I have not yet found the formula which would prove psychologically what I only feel to be the truth.

—It is somewhat the same with Schopenhauer, who lived very comfortably in Frankfurt, independent and entirely from personal preference, and who theoretically thought the whole world bad, in which he was not wrong and yet had no right to say so ...'



Even when Busoni himself was not 'having it very easy', when indeed he was a grievously sick man one year before his death, he was still endeavouring to promote the understanding of Mozart. The following excerpt is quoted (in my own translation from the Italian) by kind permission of Dr. Augusto Anzoletti of Bologna.<sup>4</sup> The letter was written to Dr. Anzoletti's late brother, Sig. Emilio Anzoletti:

'Berlin, March 12th, 1923.

... You will be interested to know that I was in negotiation with *La Scala* for providing the recitatives to the *Zauberflöte*. In Italy they do not like spoken dialogue and the singers do not know how to speak it. I myself, foreseeing the situation exactly, offered to compose the recitatives, based on my solid understanding of Mozart. The proposition was accepted in principle, and I would have figured on the poster, if a damned relapse had not impeded me in continuing and finishing the work begun. Think of my humiliation! Had to renounce it!—Now I don't know what they will use!—Imagine!—the opera was not performed<sup>5</sup> till 1805! Little do I care about the effect it produced on that pack of fools, and yet I would bother to contribute to the event for love of the cause ...'

At that time, Busoni was occupied with his masterpiece, the opera *Doktor Faust*, which remained unfinished when he died from nephritic heart disease in 1924. It speaks of his great love for Mozart that, for his sake, he was prepared to lay aside the work on which he had staked his all, precisely at the time when he needed every minute to try and complete it. There is in *Faust* a serenity that he learned from Mozart, a serenity only to be found in his late works. He, who was so critical of even the finest examples of musical literature (and much more so of his own music) once said that the score of *Figaro* had remained for him like a lighthouse in a storm. Mozart's *Heiterkeit* (serene merriment) was certainly a healthy antidote to the soul-poison of the war years. Busoni had a great appreciation of Mozart's 'light touch'—the Latin aspect—and once declared that the 'school of Mozart' comprised: Cherubini, Rossini, Mendelssohn, Gounod, Bizet, and Saint-Saens. One may hazard the conjecture that Busoni's characteristic *ceremonioso* derives from what we may call the masonic aspect of Mozart. In his own one-act opera, *Arlecchino* (1916),<sup>6</sup> we see how he learned from Mozart to say serious things attractively and with humour, how to mix philosophy and pleasure. But the compositions which best exemplify his 'Mozartian aspect' and testify to his great reverence for his beloved master are the *Concertino for clarinet and small orchestra*, Op. 48 (1919) and the *Divertimento for flute and orchestra*, Op. 52 (1920). These works were probably suggested by the instrumental cadenzas that he composed about the same time for various Mozart concertos for flute or clarinet.

<sup>4</sup> An intimate friend of Busoni for many years, who also made some very beautiful translations into Italian verse of Busoni's opera libretti, originally written by the composer in German. Prof. Dent was in error when he said that these verse translations were made by Emilio Anzoletti.

<sup>5</sup> In Italy.

<sup>6</sup> Performed at Glyndebourne in 1954 and recorded there by H.M.V.

It was Busoni's way always to compose cadenzas for the concertos he performed. Thus he wrote cadenzas for 9 Mozart piano concertos. His powers of improvisation were truly phenomenal and the envy of a musician of the calibre of Sir Henry Wood. As a youth, Busoni always included an improvisation in his recitals, the theme being supplied by a member of the audience. But later on, he became suspicious of this practice and discontinued it out of a feeling akin to shame for its suggestion of the circus. Then too, he became more and more reflective about music and only wrote after a great deal of thought, though, as a young man, he had composed his *Lustspiel Overture*, Op. 38 (1897)—perhaps the first composition in which the influence of Mozart becomes apparent—in the truly Mozartian manner of sitting down one midnight and writing on till dawn and so finishing the entire first draft at one sitting. But he never repeated that feat. Though he improvised for amusement till the end of his life, he preferred to write down his cadenzas to the Mozart concertos. All the same, they preserve the air of extemporisation, though very clever extemporisation. Sir Henry Wood, in his autobiography, speaks of Busoni's Mozart-playing and how he heard him often take with both hands two octaves apart what appeared in the score as single notes; and in justification, Sir Henry invokes the names of Landowska and Tovey, Tovey 'who claimed to be an absolute *purist* in *not* confining himself strictly to Mozart's text'. Perhaps the best description of Busoni's Mozart-playing is to be found in the *Collected Writings of Samuel Langford* (O.U.P. 1929). He discusses the performance in Manchester in 1919 of Mozart's E flat Concerto (K.482). After taking a certain 'felicity of execution' to be the hall-mark of Mozart-playing, he says that

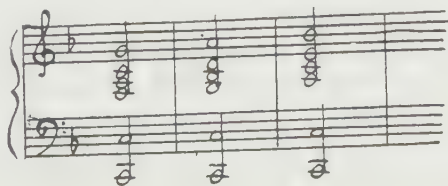
'Busoni's playing had too much of purpose, forethought, and poetic imagination. It did not lack delicacy, nor fancy, nor waywardness, nor felicity, for it refined upon all these things in a sharp, microscopic way, which was a revelation at every turn, and yet imposed a severity and greatness upon them, and added a poignancy beyond what their artlessness could yield.'

It is worth noting that Mozart was the first music he played in public—the first movement of the Sonata in C (K.309) at the *Schiller-Verein*, Trieste, November 24th, 1873. He also played Mozart in his first concert with orchestra—the Concerto in C minor (K.491) also in Trieste, May 1874. And he played Mozart in what was to be one of his last appearances as pianist, the two Berlin concerts in 1921, at which he performed 6 concertos in two evenings.

Closely linked with Busoni's piano-playing and composition, mediator between the two, as it were, was his art of transcription, to which he brought a scholarship which lifted it right out of that deplorably low region of cheap arrangements, a scholarship which one must admit, even if one disagrees with the finished result. In the *Introduction* to his monumental edition of the *Well-tempered Clavier*, vol. 1 (1894) he says it would be a sorry blunder to apply to Mozart the same kind of transcription which is possible with Bach. He recognized that the light, fragile texture of Mozart's music was to be respected and that to overload it with additions

would be like hanging a delicate water-colour in a heavy gilt frame intended to hold an oil-painting. With the help of the German language, we might say that Busoni had found the *zart* in Mozart. But anyone who has read Mr. Girdlestone's fine volume on the Mozart piano concertos, will realize how ludicrous is the idea of playing literally 'after the manuscript', for we know that, in Mozart's case, this manuscript was often full of *hiatuses*. How indeed could he otherwise have composed almost 700 works in only 35 years? To play only what Mozart wrote in some of his *andantes* would be to ignore his intention, which, according to the contemporary practice (as one learns from C. P. E. Bach's famous *Essay*) would naturally leave the soloist free to a certain extent to indulge his fancy in improvisation, by which he could (if he was clever) admittedly win personal applause, but by which he could infuse the music with precisely that air of delicious waywardness without which Mozart is unthinkable. The *allegros*, on the other hand, can afford to have a more athletic thinness of clothing. Yet, even in *allegros*, Busoni would occasionally re-write a passage, sometimes not altering a single note of the original, not adding anything, and yet achieving a better tone and flow of movement through redistributing the notes according to the hand-positions on the keyboard. In this his governing principle was to preserve the consecutive playing of the five fingers wherever possible, sometimes even inventing what he jocularly called 'the sixth finger', by making the little finger or the thumb slide from a black key to a white one. At other times, he invented '7th, 8th, and 9th fingers' and even appeared to have a hand twice as large as any other. Actually, I have seen a plaster cast of Busoni's hands, in the *Liceo Musicale*, Bologna, and they were not very large. The fingers gave the impression of length because they were thin, the whole hand being rather thin and narrow. But there was an amazingly wide stretch between the thumb and index finger, which increased considerably the extension of the whole hand and enabled him to take 10ths and even 11ths with ease. Sometimes in Mozart's *andantes*, Busoni's hands hardly seemed to move at all, according to eye-witnesses; and, when observed through binoculars, he was seen to be making liberal use of the sliding technique in chromatic passages, which avoided the crossing under or over of a finger for almost an octave at a time.

The most accessible score for the study of Busoni's method of transcribing Mozart is the *Duetto Concertante* for 2 pianos (1919), which may be compared profitably with its original source, the Piano Concerto in F (K.459). All the points mentioned above will be seen in this score. The student may be perturbed at one point, however: namely, to notice harmony such as the following:





This does not occur in Mozart's score. That Busoni used it is symptomatic of his philosophic and aesthetic approach to Mozart, in whom he discovered all manner of strange hints and glimpses of the 20th century. In that view, he would appear to be in agreement with Schoenberg, who, in his *Harmonielehre*, shows how quite complicated chords may be derived through chromatically altering the notes of common chords, and then goes on to say that only in Bach or Mozart would such chords be found before the present century. But Busoni has another reason for the 9th chords quoted above: he justifies them because they are latent in the melody; in his *Neue Aesthetik* he says 'every melody contains the germ of its own harmony'. How sad that the dry-as-dust academician (not the true academician) is the only person who would notice Busoni's chords of the 9th while the ordinary, honest-to-goodness music-lover would accept them as part of the great fun of the music!

Again, some timid people would be horrified to find in Busoni's Cadenzas to the Concerto in C (K.467) such a chord as this:



Mozart would assuredly not be shocked, however, for if one sees facsimiles of his letters, one can find him writing out such chords. Admittedly they were for string instruments; but Busoni demonstrated how Mozart and indeed all classical masters wrote the same kind of music (here is the 'Unity' idea again) for different instruments, the necessary technical adjustments being details—important details but still details—in relation to the overall plan. Busoni's chord in the above illustration merely exemplifies an extension of this idea, in addition to the enhanced possibilities of the modern piano being an active element.

By now it becomes evident that Busoni was not interested in an *embalmed* Mozart but a *living* Mozart. He loved old instruments, but only in small rooms or as beautiful antique furniture. He waxed greatly enthusiastic over Arnold Dolmetsch's clavichords and actually had him build one personally for him, which he often played with much satisfaction and for which he even wrote a *Sonatina* (the *Sonatina ad usum infantis*, 1916). But he was convinced that Mozart could be played without sacrilege on that 'iron monster', the modern concert grand, and his transcriptions were sincere attempts to make the music sound better in its new medium.

Everyone knows Busoni as the transcriber of Bach: almost no-one knows him as the transcriber of Mozart. Busoni's transcriptions number over 100 and comprise 17 different authors<sup>7</sup> from Bach to Schoenberg. In this voluminous collection of

<sup>7</sup> Bach, Beethoven, Bizet, Brahms, Chopin, Cornelius, Cramer, Gade, Goldmark, Liszt, Mozart, Nováček, Schoenberg, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner, Weber.

material—a giant school for young pianists!—there are exactly 30 transcriptions from Mozart, that is, almost a third of the total number of transcriptions. In his last days, Busoni intended to bring out a complete edition of the Mozart Piano Concertos, in collaboration with his celebrated pupil, Egon Petri. He planned the work to consist of a music type comprising three sets of staves: one, Mozart's original solo part; two, Busoni's revision of this; and lastly Petri's reduction (for a second piano) of the orchestral part. One of the many magnificent unfinished projects of this eternal idealist—no whit less magnificent for being unfinished.<sup>8</sup> Sufficient still remains of the bulk of his Mozart studies to enlighten all who have ears to hear. In appending a complete chronological list of the Mozart transcriptions, I commend to my brother pianists a man and artist whom they would be foolish to forget: Ferruccio Busoni da Empoli.

<sup>8</sup> One wonders (rather pessimistically) if the much-needed *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* of the *Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum* will envisage in the enlightened days of 1956 anything comparable to Busoni's plan.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF TRANSCRIPTIONS OF MOZART

BY FERRUCCIO BUSONI

NOTE: All published by Breitkopf & Haertel. Numbers in brackets [ ] are from the Köchel-Einstein *Mozart-Verzeichnis* (1937); numbers in parentheses ( ) are from the previous Köchel classification.

- | Date  | Title  |
|-------|--|
| 1888  | 3 <i>Symphonies</i> arr. for piano solo:<br>D major [K.186b] (K.202)<br>G major (K.318)<br>G major [K.425a] (K.444)                              |
| 1904  | <i>Overture: Die Entführung aus dem Serail</i> for orch., with concert ending by F.B.  |
| 1905? | <i>Overture: Die Zauberflöte</i> arr. for pianola M.S.   |
| 1907  | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in D minor</i> (K.466)   |
| 1908  | <i>Overture: Don Giovanni</i> for orch., with concert ending by F.B.   |
| 1909  | <i>Giga</i> (K.574), <i>Bolero</i> (Figaro), <i>e Variazione</i> : study after Mozart, no. 3 of <i>An die Jugend</i> , a series of piano pieces. |
| 1912  | <i>Figaro Fantasie</i> : Mozart-Liszt, completed by F.B.   |
| 1913  | <i>Andantino</i> from Pf. <i>Concerto in E flat</i> , (K.271) freely arr. for Pf. solo with cadenza by F.B.                                      |
| 1914  | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in E flat</i> , (K.271).   |
| 1917  | <i>Réminiscences de Don Juan</i> : Mozart-Liszt, critical-instructive edition by F.B.  |
| 1919  | <i>Duetto Concertante</i> for 2 Pfs. after the finale of Pf. <i>Concerto in F</i> , (K.459).   |
| —     | <i>Rondo Concertante</i> after the finale of Pf. <i>Concerto in E flat</i> , (K.482).  |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in E flat</i> , (K.482).   |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in A major</i> , (K.488).  |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in C minor</i> , (K.491).  |
| —     | <i>Cadenza instrumentata</i> for slow movement of Flute <i>Concerto in G</i> [K.285c] (K.313) M.S.   |
| —     | <i>Cadenza instrumentata</i> for slow movement of Flute <i>Concerto in D</i> [K.285d] (K.314) M.S.   |
| —     | <i>Concert Suite: Idomeneo</i> arr. for orch. by F.B. <i>Overture; Sacrifice Scene, Festival March.</i>  |
| 1920  | <i>Don Giovanni's Serenade</i> tr. for Pf. solo in <i>Lo Staccato</i> ( <i>Die Klavierübung</i> ).   |
| —     | <i>Study no. 6</i> (on themes from <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> ) from the <i>Kurze Stücke zur Pflege des Polyphonen Spiels</i> for Pf.                |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in G</i> (K.453).  |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in F</i> (K.459).  |
| —     | <i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. <i>Concerto in C</i> (K.467).  |
| 1921  | <i>Sonata in D</i> for 2 Pfs. [K.375a] (K.448) arr. with a cadenza by F.B. M.S.  |

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
—	<i>Cadenzas</i> for Pf. Concerto in C (K.503).
1922	<i>Fantasie in F minor</i> for mechanical organ (K.608) arr. for 2 Pfs.
—	<i>Adagio</i> from Clarinet Concerto (K.622) revised with cadenza by F.B.
1923	<i>Recitativi istrumentati</i> for <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (unfinished).

The author wishes to express his gratitude to the following for kindly permitting publication of material used in this article:

Dr. Volkmar Andreae, Zürich, for letters of Busoni; Dr. Augusto Anzoletti, Bologna, for one letter of Busoni; *Melos*, Mainz, for the quotation from Busoni's essay, *Vom Wesen der Musik*; Universal Edition, Vienna, for the quotations from their Busoni number of the *Anbruch*, 1921; and the Oxford University Press for the quotation from the Collected Writings of Samuel Langford.

The Busoni quotations are translated by Ronald Stevenson and appear here for the first time, the original German (or Italian) of the quoted Busoni letters never having been published.



## GEORGES ENESCO

### *Yehudi Menuhin*

Most peoples' lives fill a particular niche in the complex of existence, of which they are only a fraction. Enesco's life could hardly be thought of as a fraction of any part, in that his span is a full arc uniting opposites and binding them together with tension and a unity which must perforce bring about great results.

As a musician he inherited, like Bartok, a rich folk tradition, the colour and sound in music of an almost sensual feeling, which only comes to the born and indigenous musician. The violin is indigenous in this sense to that whole region of the Danube basin where he spent his earliest years, and nowhere in the world is there a stronger sense of belonging to the earth.

This is what Enesco inherited by birth; and then consider him as a polished, courtly, cultivated musician and man, which he was through having absorbed the culture of Vienna and later of Paris and London.

His tremendous talent brought him at the age of eight to the Conservatoire in Vienna, as a pupil of Hellmesberger; and there, three years later, he was already playing in the Vienna Philharmonic under Brahms, Mahler and others. Enesco was moving at this early age along that invisible stream from East to West which since Haydn has fed the aesthetic and refined world of the West with the virile peasant blood of the East. In Vienna he found the German classical tradition from the North, together with Italian melody from the South, a fusion clearly illustrated in his own *2nd Rumanian Rhapsody*, Op. 11.

Enesco moved on to Western Europe, to Paris, where he absorbed that last degree of elegance, refinement, and wit. As a man, too, he reflected the same incredible span which tied two opposites that are otherwise irreconcilable, or would tear a lesser person to shreds. Contrast, for instance, his love of Wagner, whose music he could, up to almost his last year, re-create in the most transcendent manner on the poor keys of his Pleyel piano; contrast this urge for the opulent, erotic, infinite and unlimited, with his circumstances at the time. Enesco lived rather like a monk. All he needed and all he had was a narrow iron bedstead in a narrow white-washed room, a desk, pen and paper, and, as a luxury, a piano. This was the way I found him in the magnificent mansion in Bucharest which belonged to his wife, the princess. I was struck by the contrast, under the same roof, between the Byzantine, the ornate, the multiplication of velvet cushions, the lace, scent, incense, of her rooms, with this single, narrow, almost monklike cell, to which Enesco retired from the world.

He continued to be the Court musician, as the princess's world continued to be the Court, and she delighted—in fact she could only survive—so long as she had

in her immediate vicinity something of that oriental splendour; and Enesco continued to be her Court musician who brought an infinitely larger dimension to her narrow and prescribed world.

Even the reduced apartments which in later years they shared in Paris (in the same building where Enesco had first taken up abode in Paris as a young man), even this apartment, consisting of only two small rooms, contained the two worlds; the one which held the remnants of the glorious court of another day, still full almost to suffocation with embroidered cloths, gold lace, pictures of Royalty and illustrious friends pinned to the walls, and, to lend a touch of reality, perhaps an apple or pear and a few flowers.

Enesco's room was the other world. Owing to his ever-worsening infirmity he was more and more a prisoner, and despite a complete lack of view, air and sunlight, despite the absence of whatever we lesser mortals find necessary to remind us of the more beautiful, restoring, comforting and supporting elements of life, Enesco could be happy with his music alone. There he sat in a chair, on one side of which was his desk piled high with manuscripts and music, and on the other side of which was his piano. He almost never left this chair except when he was finally confined to bed. In fact, the last years of his crippled life, crippled in that he had difficulty in getting around or moving, found him almost a prisoner in a small room of his apartment in the Rue de Clichy. He seemed to have no need of flowers, or trips to exotic countries, or any other reminders that he was famous or glorious or important or powerful. His music had made him independent of all tangible material requirements. The greatest basic tension and satisfaction of Enesco's life is precisely this one of constantly sublimating urges.

I remember a few words which struck my childish fancy when I was studying with him at the age of 11, and which he addressed to my father as we were leaving after a lesson. He was at that time in the prime of his power, a lion of a man, handsome, romantic, in every way a man who shone out from amongst a multitude. They were very simple words, I cannot remember them exactly—but he said that he was finding life somewhat more placid and easier now that he was reaching the late 40's. The full significance of these words I only understood later on, in the light of what I came to know of his nature; an intense tempestuous nature always under control, with a courteous and most delicate sense of tact and humour, and withal a great pride—pride that came, not from any sense of personal achievement but from far, far back in his race and from a subconscious awareness of his own measure.

He was a man, for instance, whom one could not possibly help in the sense of giving him anything which he felt was not his by right. Many were the friends who used more devious means to bring to him such assistance as they could, but they were all helpless to broach such a subject head on, as helpless with Enesco as with Bartok for that matter. Both had this peasant, stubborn obstinacy, and when Enesco had an opinion or when he took a stand, nothing in the whole wide world would shake it.

He felt he had a right to royalties on his compositions and on his recordings, as well as a right to his house in Sinaia, for which he had worked hard in his earlier days. But these properties failing, he would not accept anything else. He preferred to live humbly.

Thus it was that he steadfastly and stubbornly refused the offers of the present Rumanian government to help him or to bring him back to his native country. He felt these offers were made for some ulterior motive, perhaps to exploit his great popularity. In fact, he was worshipped by his own people. He preferred to complete his life poor and almost anonymous (except for his admiring and faithful, devoted friends who came to his side whenever they could). He preferred to end his days against the background of near anonymity, which only the fiercely independent and personal French seem able to provide for so many of their great men.

There is no doubt that what sustained Enesco through a tireless life, in which he never spared himself but gave of himself heedlessly for anyone and to anyone who asked, was his basic peasant strength, the strength of those most vital people of the Danube basin. In fact, our contemporary world of music is indebted to many of those people who have inherited the vigours of an old agricultural tradition. In rare moments Enesco reverted to the 'gypsy fiddler' again.

One of the works that illustrate most completely this fusion of the untutored gypsy with the cultured musician is his *Third Violin Sonata*, in the popular Rumanian style. By putting everything down in musical notation he has succeeded in capturing and pinning down once and for all, the fantastic sounds, rhythms, and all the various technical devices which are part of the traditional folk music. No one else could have done it—for that person would have to be both the wild fiddler and the most cultured of musicians.

I know of no other work more painstakingly edited or planned. It is correct to say that it is quite sufficient to follow the score for one to interpret the work. Of all composers' metronome marks, these are the only accurate ones to my knowledge. Enesco was, of course, a superb violinist, and this would have helped him in his task. I have never heard any other violinist to equal him.

I remember an interruption in my lesson one afternoon when Ravel burst into the room and begged Enesco to play that very evening his new *Violin Sonata* for the publishers. Enesco, with his usual Edwardian courtesy, asked my father and me to allow him a little while for this purpose. We were amazed to see him play the work, at sight, with Ravel at the piano. He then asked Ravel if he would mind if he played it through a second time, which he then proceeded to do—playing it, this time, completely from memory.

As a teacher he had great insight, the sure touch and at the same time an extraordinary humility. He thought at one time in 1928 that I was becoming too free and gypsy-like in my own playing, so he suggested that I go to Adolf Busch to learn more of the classic German style. That was typical of the man, and he proved to be the only teacher I ever met who realized that no one teacher is sufficient for any one pupil. The only time I ever remember any impatience at all, was once when I was



having a lesson with him following my studies with Adolf Busch. This was my second period of lessons with Enesco, and I was then about 15 years old. I began the G minor Fugue of Bach, *forte*. He was surprised because it was a work we had done before together, and, without wishing to betray Adolf Busch, I repeated as my own what the latter had told me, which was that all fugues should begin *forte*.

Enesco then showed me that this Fugue began rather tentatively and was delicate in its inception, and he said that he imagined that I would probably come round to his opinion sometime later. Of course I have, and I blush now to think that I ever propounded such a preposterous law.

Since those days, what Enesco told me 'on the wing', as it were, comes back as I play those pieces again, and they are invariably right from a musical as well as a far greater than musical reason. They are right simply because they are never at variance with the essential style of the composer.

There was hardly a work of music that he did not know, from Monteverdi and Bach through all styles and all countries to Schoenberg. Any opera, symphony, or chamber music work one might mention he could play off in the most inspired fashion on the piano, using various auxiliary means such as whistles, grunts and singing to convey the full impact and breadth of the score. A *Tristan* such as perhaps has never been heard except in the imagination of the greatest interpreters he could convey on the keyboard of his old Pleyel piano.

He could have made a great reputation as a pianist if he had had the wish.

In his last years he was almost a cripple and paralysed on his left side; this body, which had been so magnificent, contrasted with a mind that had not ceased expanding and accumulating. His constant effort was to put people completely at their ease, to keep them happy and interested, to make jokes, sometimes rather gruesome ones, as when he referred to his paralysed limbs as 'Something that should hang at the butcher's'.

He still managed to conduct in these last years, and every musician who has ever played with Enesco and every person who has ever come into contact with him, has come away feeling as if he has had a revelation. Enesco's capacity to release in every individual their own latent inspiration made them love and respect him.

I wish that some of Enesco's music, unknown in this country, were performed, particularly his opera *Oedippe*, which I think is his most beautiful and noble work. His chamber music, some of it of recent composition, also belongs to the permanent repertory. I feel it will be with Enesco, as it has been with Bartok, that his deepest contributions to our culture will only be appreciated as the fruit of his life's work comes to be heard by an ever-widening public.

The following photographs of Georges Enesco, taken by Thurston Hopkins at the Summer School of Music in 1952, are reproduced by courtesy of *Picture Post*.







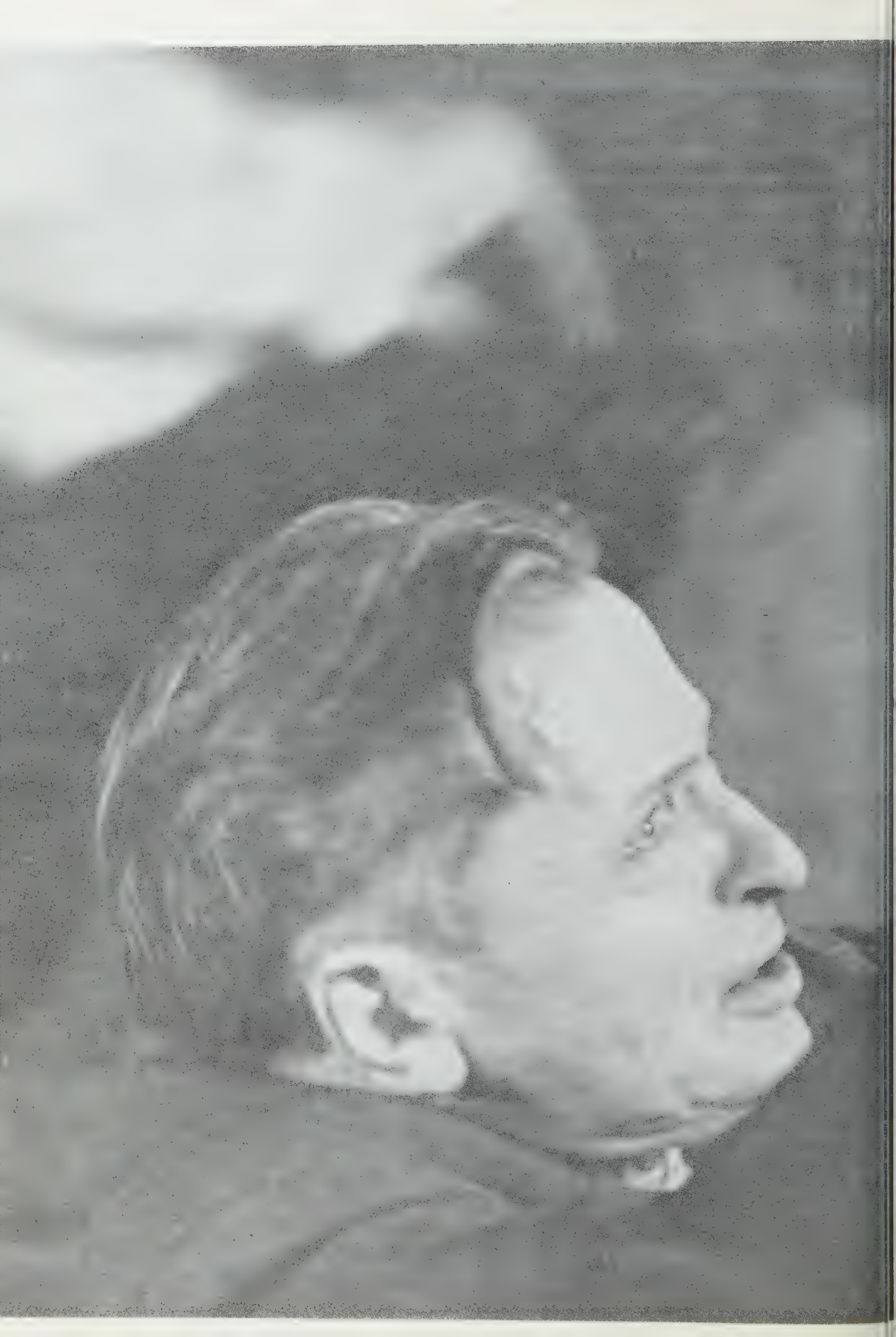
















*Aleksandr Helmann*



## ALEKSANDR HELMANN AS A PIANIST

*Klaus Egge*

It is no longer unusual, in our time, to meet great pianists. Technical mastery is taken for granted nowadays, and I think that both Liszt and Chopin would be surprised if they came back and saw how many pianists there are today who surpass them from the technical point of view.

But when we review all these dazzling performers who appear through the concert season, year after year, we must acknowledge that there are very few who in the end stand out as marked personalities with such distinctive and individual characteristics that they have burnt themselves into our memory. There are few who have that kind of all-conquering abundance which can grip a whole audience and win it over, finally and completely. Aleksandr Helmann was one of the few, one whose personality as an artist took so strong a hold on us that we can never forget it.

As he played there was a magic power around him, as if some strong inner process were at work within his very soul. He always managed to identify himself so completely with the work he was presenting that one said to oneself: This interpretation is really *re-creation*.

Helmann thought that 19th century music did not fulfil the promise held out by Bach and Mozart. He himself was interested mainly in the development of polyphonic music, and he studied diligently in libraries and archives in order to master the principles of linear composition of the Middle Ages and up to the death of Bach. He did not study merely out of interest in the history of music: no, it was rather that to him the richness of melody and rhythm of pure linearity offered the healthiest musical nourishment.

He also maintained that the ability to play Bach in a manner that is musically alive had been impaired by the outlook of the 19th century: Bach is played either too 'romantically', or, on the other hand, too mechanically—because the style is strange to our time. Helmann had a genius's gift of bringing this music to life.

In Mozart, too—the composer closest to his heart—he was more thorough than others in finding out the appropriate style. He provided himself with an instrument of the type on which Mozart himself played his own piano works. In this way he discovered that a *forte* on this instrument produced a sound with a unique dramatic effect, the mechanism being so sensitive that even a light touch gave a strong sound. Consequently, the grading of strength from *pp* to *ff* had to be quite different from what

it is on the present-day piano. He maintained that Mozart's music should be performed with considerably more musical vitality than in the controlled, refined readings to which we are usually subjected today. This is not to say that he played Mozart just louder than other pianists—for, on the contrary, he insisted on the utmost delicacy of detail and phrasing, and his *pianissimo* was extraordinarily fine. It was rather that his interpretation of Mozart had an unusual strength and robustness which came as a surprise to many. It was one of his dreams to play all of Mozart's piano works in the course of time.

I mention especially his interpretations of Bach and Mozart because they not only distinguished him from the usual master performers, but also revealed something of his method of work as an artist. He was, in fact, both a musical scientist and a musical philosopher, and from this came the depth of his interpretations.

But, after all, his greatest resources lay in his innate gifts as a pianist. He had an extraordinarily buoyant rhythm and an explosive temperament, so that when he performed music with a strong rhythmical element (as, for instance, Prokofiev's Concerto No. 3 in C major), then he played ecstatically and almost aggressively. He could build up dramatically powerful climaxes, for when it was a question of the greatest technical difficulties in wild *tempi* his virtuosity brooked no restraint. He took no small delight in playing Liszt—one has only to remember his virtuoso performance of his own arrangement of Liszt's *La Campanella*. And he could let himself go and frolic like a juggler with his enormous technique in order to give the audience just as much as they wanted in the way of brilliant and ostentatious piano playing. It is indeed a paradox that Helmann, having such a highly refined aesthetic and being so conscious of the ethical power of music, should at the same time have so close an affinity to romantic music, as he showed in his brilliant performance of Rachmaninoff's Concerto in D minor. Yes, he was versatile, nothing human was strange to him, he could perform convincingly all kinds of music.

To his work as a composer he brought the same searching mind and wide philosophical outlook, constantly seeking knowledge and understanding of the very nature of music. He came to the view that the twelve-note technique was the dominating factor in 20th-century composition, opening up a rich and uncharted world of tonal relationships in which to find new material for the individual expression of all thoughts, emotions and moods.

I shall never forget the last time I saw Helmann in his home in London in March, 1954. Many times had the thought of death been brought near to him. He played for me a piano work that he had written as a sort of spiritual close-up of himself; originally he called it *A Shadow without a Figure across the Perspective of Time*, but later he called it simply *Sonnet*, and appended to it Shakespeare's sonnet beginning:

That time of life thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or few, or none do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold . . .

It was a visionary poem in pure twelve-note style and very moving. He was quite exhausted when he finished playing: at that moment he gave everything, as so often before in his life as an artist.

Suddenly it was clear to me that he was burning himself out in an all-devouring and consuming devotion to music.

Among the contemporary composers he particularly admired was Fartein Valen, to whom he was greatly attracted both as composer and as a person. There was, I believe, a spiritual affinity between them in their outlook on music. Helmann always pointed to the expressivity and poetic imagery of Valen's music, achieved with the utmost economy. He was very proud on being told that Valen considered him an ideal interpreter of his works.

It was Helmann who founded the Valen Society both in Oslo and in London. In acknowledgement, Valen wrote for him his *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, composed in 1951, but Helmann was already too ill to practise by the time he received the score. Valen himself passed away two months before the first performance in January, 1953. Helmann was still too ill to play himself and wrote to Valen's publisher: 'It is a bitter thought that it has not been allowed to me to give the first performance of a work by my beloved Valen, even though it was written for me. It is a work full of a gentle, magic beauty, with spiritual affinity only to God and Mozart. I have only one wish: may Robert Riefeling play it for both of us . . .'

These beautiful words draw the noblest picture of this great artist. Thus shall we remember him.



## THE TEACHING OF ALEKSANDR HELMANN

*Margaret Stevenson*

When severe illness put an end to his concert career in 1951, Helmann took a few advanced pupils. To teaching he brought the experience of more than thirty years on the concert platform—his first appearance was at the age of seven—and an approach entirely his own, for he subscribed to no school of piano playing. Studying first with his father, he had a considerable success as a child prodigy before the family left Europe in 1921. His training in the techniques of the Russian virtuoso school was continued under Josef Hofmann in America; Moritz Rosenthal introduced him to the aristocratic Viennese tradition. By the time he was fourteen he could probably have held his own in execution and range of dynamics with many celebrated pianists of the day, but he saw interpretation through the eyes of the composer to whom each phrase is not a series of notes and patterns but a sentence which may be spoken in many different ways. He realized that, despite tremendous facility, such subtlety of expression lay beyond his control; working alone for two years he laid the foundation of his mastery of the instrument.

The present article is concerned mainly with one aspect of his teaching,—the technical basis of this mastery. Complete command of the instrument was, to him, the *sine qua non* of communication between performer and listener; it followed that the pupil's first step was to learn how to use his hands correctly so that, in due course, they might become his obedient servants. At no time, however, did Helmann allow the mechanics of piano playing to obscure the musical content; nor, in paying the most scrupulous attention to interpretative detail, did he let the pupil lose sight of the architectural proportions of the whole work. Helmann had an unusually wide knowledge of musical history, acquired not just for its own sake, but as a means to a fuller understanding of the score. Nothing in his mind was static: the germination and evolution of ideas was a constant process and he did not allow the pupil to sit back and make use of him as a reference book; instead one was encouraged—in fact, driven—to study, search and think for oneself. In frequent and intensely stimulating discussions the pupil was provoked, with devastating if kindly wit, into finding many of his own answers. Perhaps because he had had to think out so many of his own problems, Helmann, unlike many virtuosos, knew and could explain exactly why and how he produced every sound. Lessons lasted for three or four hours and it was advisable not to forget too much or too often! He expected you to practise eight hours a day, six days a week, and if praise was rare, he appreciated hard work. In everything he did, not only in the field of music, Helmann was a

perfectionist and he hoped for a similar attitude in his pupils. Although one might have studied with him for a lifetime and still had much to learn, the very nature of his teaching precludes any feeling that with his death a door has been closed.

#### FINGER EXERCISES

He had evolved two sets of exercises for developing the utmost degree of power, precision and control in each finger. The simpler set (Example 1) always began on the thumb in the right hand and the fifth finger in the left (the reverse when descending) and made use of all the permutations of fingering with these two as the 'fixed' fingers. The more complicated set (Example 2) consisted of six exercises selected from the possible permutations beginning on the second, third and fourth fingers.

#### Finger Exercises

Exl. 1 2 3 4 5 1 2

5 4 3 2 1 5 4

Ex2a) 3 1 2 4 5 3

3 5 4 2 1 3

b) 4 2 3 5 1 4

2 4 3 5 1 4

They look simple and dull but they are neither; if they are to serve their purpose as spade-work for growing muscle, every action must be watched with close attention. These exercises had to be practised for three hours every morning in all keys and in four different ways. After a minimum of three months, the time might be reduced to one hour and finally the exercises were put on the shelf to be used, perhaps, after a holiday or for warming cold hands. At first it is difficult to distinguish between the muscles that should be in use and may tire justifiably and those which must be relaxed and free from tension. Helmann pointed out from the beginning that pain in the outer forearm muscles and the back of the hand was to be expected and welcomed as a sign of muscular development, but that any tension elsewhere was wrong and, in particular, there should never be any soreness or strain under the wrist and forearm. When the hand and arm were really tired they should be allowed to hang straight down so that the course of the arteries was uninterrupted.

There are four main ways in which to do the exercises; there is so much to watch that one can be left gasping even at the very slow speed of one note per second. At first, with corrections and repeats, it is not possible to work through more than one

or two keys in the allotted three hours. The hand position remains always the same, the thumb lying straight and the fingers curved comfortably so that the tips rest on the keyboard. There should be a 'C' space between the base of the thumb and the first finger; in the early stages one tends to let the hand sit down and close this into a tight-lipped smile. One finger is anchored to the keyboard, the others, when not in action, should be drawn up as high as they will go; forearm, wrist and hand are approximately level. The back of the hand should remain parallel to the keyboard, not tipping to assist the thumb or fifth which must work as fingers.

The first way of practising is the *loud percussive* in which each finger comes down on its note from directly above, as fast as possible and with no wavering or hesitation, as though the brain's command had given it an electric shock. At the impact of the next finger it snaps up to its former position, the two interchanging like pistons in a machine. The weight of the arm rests on the finger or fingers engaged—and by weight I mean the natural weight of the hand and arm, not a thumbing of notes into the keyboard accompanied by heavy breathing, as though cramming a recalcitrant suitcase; the movement is of finger only.

The second way of practising is the *light percussive*: basically, this is the harpsichord touch and Helmann considered it essential for the satisfactory performance of 17th and 18th century music and for the clear articulation of light, rapid passages in, say, Chopin or Ravel. The action is the same as for the loud percussive: the attack and release of each finger must, as before, be instantaneous, but as no weight is used in this instance, the speed of the finger's descent governs the amount of tone produced. As this speed of finger action increases, the impetus of the finger striking the note will cause it to rebound; the forearm becomes a shock-absorber and by very slight pressure on the wrist (i.e. release of weight) enables the finger to keep the note down for the correct duration.

In the work described above, there should be no noticeable break between the sounds; the next step is to introduce an instant of silence by releasing each note before the impact of the next. Helmann maintained that controlled timing of this 'space' was vital to the command of the many degrees between legato and the sharpest staccato, and that, when playing a staccato passage, you should think about the duration of the space rather than of the note. Conversely, he made one practise delaying the release for half the value of the following note; this he used in order to obtain a delicate legato, particularly in two- or three-note phrases without pedal. (This is illustrated in Example 3 in the section on Fingering.)

The last two ways of practising the exercises, the *loud and soft legato*, may be described together. The movement of each finger is continuous and at an even speed. Thus, in Example 1, as the third finger plays E and the second releases D to return slowly to its position above, the fourth is descending to F, etc. From above, the hands appear to be uncoiling slowly like a snake; from the side, the individual fingers look like a high-stepping Hackney in slow motion.



When first working at the exercises one is fighting in the dark with some idea of what one is meant to be doing, but little ability to translate the mental picture into action, and no conception of the ultimate feeling of freedom. It is easier to grasp the mechanical, snapped interchange of fingers in the percussive exercises than to gain control of the continuous legato action. When Helmann played a fast, light passage he sat still, relaxed, the hand moving quietly up or down the keyboard; there was no unnecessary activity, only the fingers shot in and out like lizard's tongues. After some weeks, one may realize suddenly that the fingers are carrying out the orders of a mind in full command and thinking *only* in terms of sound, as the necessary physical actions have become subconscious and all but the few muscles in use are relaxed. The recognition of this state of alert and critical detachment is immediate, for it is unmistakable, but to make it a habit is another matter. For a long time it remains transitory and only too easily disrupted by cold hands or nervousness.

#### OCTAVES AND CHORDS

Helmann used to help each pupil to find the 'lock' for octaves best suited to his hand. The three middle fingers should be held together, pointing towards the outside of the hand but they should not be too straight or they are apt to catch intermediate notes, and the hand will become unwieldy in wrist octaves; nor should they be curled in too tightly, for then the inner fingers will not readily be available in passages. Once the lock has been found, it holds good for any type of octave passage. As an exercise, Helmann gave some pupils the octave *Etude* of Chopin (Op. 25 No. 10), showing them how to work at it in a slow, rather heavy staccato with wrist action only, raising the hands between each octave as high as the maintenance of the lock permitted in an even, continuous movement. At this stage, sustained notes were regarded as having the same duration as those in the chord to which they belonged. At first, a few bars were exhausting, and one was warned to rest when necessary, for the wrist could be damaged permanently by forcing tired muscles in octave work.

In chord playing, whether in a *pianissimo* accompaniment figure or in the largest passages, Helmann insisted on absolute simultaneity of impact and tonal balance. He used to 'orchestrate' each chord; the required volume of each note was considered in relation to the chord, the chord to the phrase.

The chord must be formed in the air, locked and held with tremendous tension, so that, whatever the speed of impact and the weight behind it, the lock will not give. The *volume* is controlled by the height of the hand at the summit of its arc above the keyboard, by the weight and by the speed of impact: the *quality* by the tension with which it is held in the hand and by maintaining an even speed of descent into the chord. Flabby fingers which collapse into the notes, fingers locked at uneven heights, uneven speed of descent or no descent at all—perhaps a sideways slap or a

last minute push—any or all are the causes of the noise sometimes accepted as loud tone.

Rapid arpeggio chords are locked in the same way and played by tipping the hand (the wrist rising as the hand tips): thus a considerable compass may be spanned, and each note is articulated clearly and is evenly spaced. In chord passages at all speeds, the moment one chord is released the hand forms the next in the air. With jumps (and this applies to single notes as well) the elbow is the pivot; it may be likened to the point of a pair of compasses, the hand to the pencil describing an arc to come down on the chord. (Chord playing was always discussed in terms of arcs, straight lines and angles were unmentionable!) The essential thing is the fixed position of the elbow and in practising one should not look at the keyboard. Helmann would say that the notes were where they always had been—didn't you know your way around the keyboard yet? One learnt, for unhappy landings can hurt; and, curiously enough, if you really believe that the notes are there and plunge boldly, they usually are.

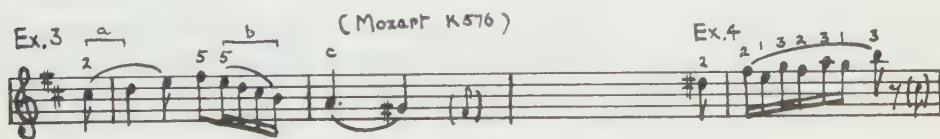
When consecutive chords lie close together, the hand goes in, up and down in one continuous movement; never may there be an inward thrust nor may the hand float about on the air as though defying the laws of gravity, then crash to earth; the speed remains constant from the time that the upward movement begins. If tremendous tone is wanted the diaphragm is drawn in, shoulder or shoulders raised, *in extremis* one may rise on the left foot until the entire weight of the body seems to be poised and concentrated at the back of the neck; this coincides with the upward curve of the hands, and the descent, as though *through* the keyboard, is like the follow-through of a drive in any sport. At the other extreme, if the fingers are locked to play a *pianissimo* accompanying figure of two notes, there is nothing to do but move the hand up and down, maintaining contact with the notes. To bring out the top or bottom notes, the hand is tipped to concentrate the weight in the outside finger or thumb. For a middle note, the finger concerned is raised higher than the others which are locked as usual: to arrive at the same time it must travel further and therefore faster and, because of the greater speed of impact, the sound will pre-dominate.

Work on chords began when the pupil had acquired some measure of strength and control of his fingers, and Helmann no longer referred to them two or three times in a lesson as blades of grass or butterflies' antennae! Even so, it was not easy to lock the simplest chord. He would make you take hold of the notes, remove your hands, turn them over and look at them and then play the chord *forte* over and over again until your fingers were certain of their positions and he was satisfied with the tone quality and balance. Soon you were expected to know the shape of any chord without first finding it on the keyboard. I remember being told, in addition to listening, to watch the left hand hammer heads when practising the middle section of Schubert's A flat *Impromptu*; they had to rise as one and fall back to equal distances from the strings.

## FINGERING

The idea that all fingers are equal was held neither in the 18th century nor by many later musicians including Beethoven and Chopin: they, like Mozart, regarded C. P. E. Bach as the father of keyboard technique. The concept of equality originated with Czerny and persists, unfortunately, in some schools today, yet one has only to look at an anatomical diagram of the hand to see that the fourth is tied by cross-tendons to the third and fifth fingers. To Helmann, fingering was not merely a matter of expediency: it was but one of the many facets of interpretation and so closely related to phrasing and touch that it cannot be discussed apart from them. He maintained that, in order to realize the composer's intentions, it was necessary to find out all one could about his style of playing, his fingering and touch; thus one might have an idea of the sounds that he had imagined in writing his works. For this reason, Helmann urged the student, whenever possible, to play the contemporary instruments and to familiarize himself with their different types of touch, their range and quality of tone. The aim was not to produce an imitation of clavi-chord, harpsichord or early forte-piano on the modern instrument but, through an appreciation of the composer's instrumental medium, to be able to see the written notes as though through contemporary eyes. In his choice of fingers, Helmann carried on the older tradition as will be apparent to those familiar with C. P. E. Bach's *Essay*. He also adopted some characteristics of 18th century execution: for instance, in the opening of Mozart's D minor *Fantasy*, he suggested resting the left thumb on the wood; this supports the hand for the first few notes and gives confidence in a passage where control and the delicate grading of tone is vital; the fingers lie almost straight on the keys and draw in under the hand to sound the notes.

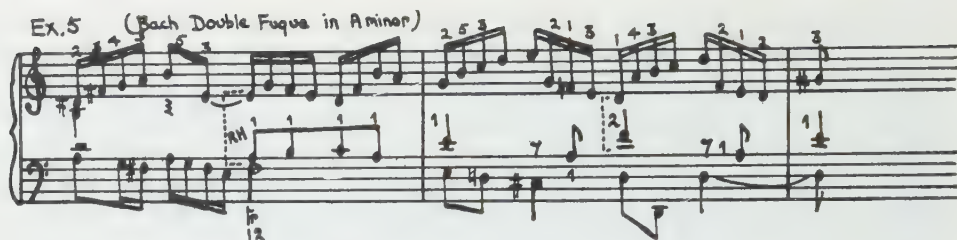
In Example 3 at (a) the first note is released about half way through the second; at (b) the fingers lie on the notes as in the *Fantasy*; at (c) the release of the first note is delayed, the second played infinitely more softly and the two are drawn off together. The fingering helps the phrasing and no pedal is used.



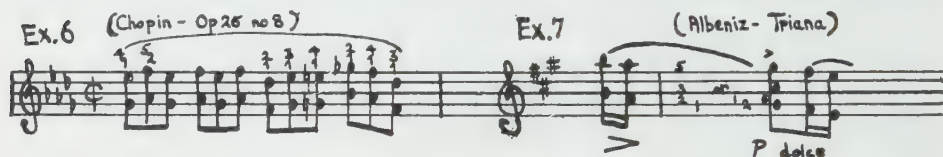
Example 4 shows one of the 'simple' passages which occur so frequently in 17th and 18th century music. Absolute precision and control are essential and the fingers used should be those best capable of playing the notes evenly as regards tone, rhythm and spacing; in this and similar phrases Helmann used 1, 2 and 3, if necessary 5, but 4 only when naturally in position. Like C.P.E., he used 'good' fingers whenever possible.

He often recommended the crossing of fingers in order to sustain a melody, or to bring out a theme as shown in Example 5.





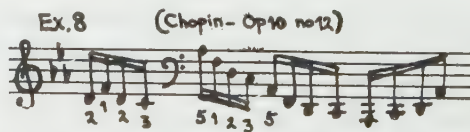
His fingering in Example 6 is not only safe; it automatically shapes the phrase.



He would not allow the spreading of a chord (unless so marked) if it was humanly possible to play the notes simultaneously. The fingering of the chord in Example 7 from Albeniz's *Triana* may be, to those with average-sized hands, of academic interest only, but even elderly hands can be stretched with persistent effort; Helmann could play it with either of the fingerings shown.

In the last movement of the Chopin B minor *Sonata* Op. 58, he played the final entry of the theme with the third over second which he wrote as below<sup>1</sup>, to illustrate the actual position of the fingers. These two fingers were almost straight and rigid and the other fingers and the thumb were tucked in behind them; the wrist stayed high and each note was played with forearm action. The resultant tone cut through the turbulent bass.

In any passage demanding rapid and brilliant execution he always used to suggest trying out the possible alternatives of fingering up to speed; sometimes the final choice looked unconventional on paper and might even be awkward at a slow tempo. In Example 8, the fourth would be considered orthodox but the fifth can be over its note as soon as the thumb has played, which the fourth cannot; in addition, its use facilitates the slight stress on the first of each group of four semiquavers.



I have included a Trill exercise (Example 9) and some examples of Helmann's

<sup>1</sup> i.e., 3

fingering of ornaments because he had given so much thought to the whole vexed question of ornamentation. He insisted that the pupil should use the *Urtext* or the least 'edited' score in studying works of any period; he might send him to seek further enlightenment in the British Museum. In playing 17th or 18th century music to him, it was courting disaster to take a chance of getting by with a neat twiddle of some sort; you were expected at least to have made an attempt to find out what *sign* the composer had written and how it was executed in his day.

### Ex. 9 Trill Exercise



## Ex. 10a)

(Bach - Gigue from English Suite in A minor)  
5132

Tempo c. d. = 126



b) (Schumann - Carnaval)

c) (Mozart K 576)



Helmann made frequent use of fingered trills and ornaments as shown in Example 10. Note the *tempo* of (a); clean execution is unlikely and much more difficult with repeated fingers. In (b), the effect should be almost vocal: in this example the second finger is held just above A<sub>h</sub>, the third slightly higher above B<sub>h</sub> and the thumb highest; to play, the hand moves in onto the thumb. If 132 or a similar combination is used, the fingers are again held over their notes at varied heights according to the order of playing, but the hand pulls outwards. If there was any unevenness in the execution of an ornament of this kind, Helmann would tell you to check up on the position of your fingers; a late note meant that the finger was too high and *vice versa*.

## THE PEDALS

The pedals were not switches to be clicked on and off, nor might they serve as a blanket to cover up the shortcomings of your fingers. Pedalling was an integral part of interpretation, for the pedals could give meaning by punctuation, breathing and stress and could separate or melt one phrase into the next. Sometimes Helmann would show a pupil exactly how he pedalled a section; more often he would try to make him aware of the infinite possibilities. He used the soft pedal to obtain variations of tone quality, not merely to reduce the quantity. He would explain that if the sustaining pedal is depressed *before* playing—i.e. the strings are opened—the overtones join in immediately; if, in what appears to be the usual way, the dampers are raised afterwards, there will be little or nothing of the overtones because the impact of the chord has occurred before the strings are free to vibrate. This is not necessarily a question of *quantity* of tone—although a bigger tone is, of course, possible when the strings are open—but of *quality* and colour: the presence of the overtones gives a wider harmonic range, adding richness and brilliance or sometimes emphasizing dissonance.

One of the first things to master is the slow release of the sustaining pedal. If it is depressed and a full chord played *forte*, then raised as slowly as possible, an astonishing variety of timbre and tonal balance is revealed as the sounds linger and die. With control of the release at all speeds, a chord can be faded into whatever follows or, by judicious easing, a chord or note—perhaps a bass—can be carried through a long phrase without accumulating ‘mud’. Not that Helmann condemned mud out of hand; a little, on occasion, could be effective, but it had to be intentional. The release at the end of a phrase is of tremendous importance: for example, at the end of the first phrase of the Brahms G minor *Rhapsody*, the pedal should be drawn up quickly but not clicked off. If the withdrawal is too fast, the tone is cut off abruptly and there is either a gap or a breathless and unrhythmical plunge into the next phrase; if too slow, the second phrase has to wait until the sound has cleared and the impetus is checked, the tension broken. In the same work, immediately after the double bar the pedal is eased up with each phrase but rarely cleared completely. This, however, is not an occasion for collecting mud; there must be clarity, but each phrase should give the impression that it grows out of the one before and merges into the next.

Helmann always tried to reveal to his pupils the world of subtle suggestion that lies between the sterility of dry, mechanically perfect finger work and luscious glissandos of sound, lacking in poise or definition. He would show how the whole character of a rapid passage could be transfigured by a slight depression of the pedal to catch two or three notes, thus underlining some aspect of harmony or contour—perhaps combined with or following a slight *crescendo*. Any number of examples could be given but the matter is not one for laying down the law; Helmann’s aim was to make each individual seek for himself until he could exploit all the resources



of a modern piano with taste and discretion and thus reveal the full content of the music to the listener.

#### PRACTISING

Many of the ills and discomforts of a sedentary occupation may be avoided by using a firm and steady chair with sufficient depth to support the back and the thighs. Having found the right chair, you were expected to sit firmly upon it: for all normal purposes the 'seat' was that of the accomplished horseman, a poised and secure fixture in the saddle; only in rare instances was it necessary to 'stand in the irons' or lean so far to one side that both hips ceased to be firmly planted.

In the early stages, Helmann advised endless, slow repetition keeping the wrist low and making the fingers do all the work; the positioning of the hand and arm were aids to be kept in reserve. As a rule, very fast or very slow practice was the most valuable, but however slow the tempo, the finger action—except in legato work—had to be as described in the exercises, very rapid and rhythmically precise. Sometimes he would suggest a gradual building up of a tempo, using a metronome. Passages like those in the *Winter Wind* and *Revolutionary Etudes* were practised first in the loud percussive method with high fingers. This teaches the fingers the whereabouts of the notes and builds up a reserve of strength. Loud percussive work at the same tempo but with low fingers—i.e. eliminating all unnecessary actions—is the preparation for speed. In, say, Mozart passages where perfect spacing and delicate grading of tone are essential to a good performance, the work is first light percussive with high fingers, then light with fingers almost on the notes, each finger giving a tiny but audible tap. Such passages as those in Schubert's A flat *Impromptu* (Op. 90) or in Chopin's *Fantasia-Impromptu* may also be practised without sounding the notes so that *only* the precise, even tap is heard. This kind of passage is not shaped by the fingers; their job is to play the notes evenly. Dynamic nuances should therefore be omitted in slow practice and then superimposed at speed by regulating the weight at the wrist. As soon as one had laid a foundation of slow work, Helmann did in fact advise frequent bursts of speed, otherwise the mind would form a habit of thinking slowly and would be left trailing behind eager fingers.

It may be helpful to describe in some detail the work on the first *Etude* of Chopin, which Helmann gave to most pupils at their first or second lesson. First, the loud legato exercise is put into practice; each finger must be imagined as tracing a series of arcs from note to note, arriving just in time to play. The back of the hand stays flat, not tipping towards the thumb or fifth finger, and contracts or expands as required. Next comes loud percussive work with high fingers, but the instant each finger releases its note it must be over the next, or as close to the striking position as the other fingers permit: thus, in the first arpeggio, when the thumb has played its springs inside the hand under the fourth finger which is over C, the thumb's next note; as the fifth releases E and it plays C again, the other fingers fan out over their notes. Descending, the pattern is reversed: the hand closes up, fifth snapping to

fourth, fourth to second; as the thumb plays C, all the fingers are bunched together over the three notes C-E; as the fifth plays E, the thumb shoots out followed by the others. The next stage is the preparation for speed—still slowly and loud percussive but with fingers almost on their notes. These three ways should be taken in turn for a time—the first may soon be dropped for good—but in addition, one arpeggio, a section or the whole attempted really fast. Some of the arpeggios which include black notes cannot be played at speed without some assistance from the hand and arm; they move in a series of horizontal arcs, in and out along the keyboard. The wrist must not turn the hand to face up or down the keyboard as this would necessitate a clumsy change of direction at the top and bottom of each arpeggio. In a descent such as the following:

G♭ bass: Right hand:    5    4    2    1    5 etc.  
                                  E♭   B♭   E♭   C    E♭

the hand slides *in* with the thumb on C and draws *out* on the fifth, E♭. The stress on the fifth should always be observed; Helmann said that Rosenthal used to emphasize it further with a little grunt! In fast work, the crescendo to the top of each arpeggio must be there; ultimately it may be assisted by raising the wrist when turning the corner at the top. Helmann drew one's attention to the shaping of the bass as a melody and not merely as a root of each arpeggio; in this and similar passages the thumb should predominate, as the upper note supplies tone, the lower resonance. (I understand that Schnabel taught this too.)

To mention two other *Etudes*: in the second of Op. 10, each pair of notes and the accompanying chord in the right hand had to be repeated once in practising, (i.e., the top notes became AA♯, AA♯, BC, BC, etc.) and the chord had to be played with the fingers, not by tipping the hand. In the trill of the thirds *Etude* (Op. 25 no. 6), the top notes were practised double speed or in triplets against the lower notes, and *vice versa*; this could be done with both hands and in any key.

Apart from the purely technical aspects of practising, it is important to work out dynamic and rhythmic proportions. If, during a lesson, you built up a *crescendo* too quickly, Helmann would drive you on until you made the climax, gasping, or fell to pieces;—comment was superfluous. A *ritenuto* was not a haphazard slowing up, it had to observe the ratio of a petrol engine running down; an *accelerando* was like a ping-pong ball bouncing off into the corner. *Rubato* might allow certain liberties, but only within the framework. In Chopin, more often than not, he would tell you to maintain strict time in the accompanying part, but the melody was free within the bar. Sometimes, provided that the pulse remained constant, it was permissible to use one or more extra beats; he might suggest working this out with a metronome, going *through* the extra beats and catching up again. It was precisely when these 'mechanical' proportions were not observed that, far from being 'expressive', *rubato* and *ritenuti* sounded artificial and the whole a formless, sentimental mass; when they were, the listener was aware only of the vital driving force behind the work, and not of a succession of arbitrary changes in *tempo*.

In building up a climax, a reserve should always be kept in hand—a mettlesome horse must be ridden not clung to for dear life—but it is only too easy, in the excitement and nervous tension of a performance, to gather momentum too quickly. If or when this happens, somehow one must go on, and Helmann advised one to exaggerate both speed and dynamics in practise so that it would always be possible to carry through, even though this might entail a severe strain on technical resources and physical stamina.

In her article, *Two Great Violin Teachers*, Sybil Eaton says that while Flesch insisted that practising and playing were two completely different things, Dounis encouraged one to practise 'all out'. Helmann would have agreed with both of them and with neither. In practising for him you had to be two people simultaneously: one, the cold-blooded analyst, dissecting every sound and every action; the other, the musician thinking and feeling each phrase. When showing one how to practise, say, the *Revolutionary Etude* at an eighth of the final speed, Helmann's left hand would give a demonstration of loud percussive finger action whilst his right hand observed every stress and slur and played with the white-hot intensity of a performance. Only when working at the exercises or in treating an *Etude* or an isolated passage as a exercise, were you the undivided analyst. In playing, whether in public or at the very first attempt, to yourself, you were the musician. Helmann would tell you that if you had worked properly, the physical actions would have become a reflex response to the mind's directive, but if failures did occur, the post-mortem had to be postponed.

However, he did not expect the impossible. Even with the clearest mental concept of a work and years of conscientious practice, the chance of a flawless performance was so slender as to be negligible. One was lucky if fifty per cent of the detail practised came off exactly as desired; therefore the mind must evaluate each sound as it *is*, not as it should have been, and be ready to adapt each phrase, even alter the concept to absorb the mishaps into a balanced and convincing whole. He maintained that it was this flexibility of mind that could lend an evergreen quality to the hundredth performance of the most hackneyed work. To realize every detail of a well thought out and deeply felt concept remained the pinnacle of achievement, but if the concept was allowed to become a straitjacket, there could be no impression of spontaneity and, moreover, every note which had failed to conform would stand out in relief.

Helmann's approach to technical problems may not provide mastery of the keyboard in six easy stages but it is a straight and narrow path to that end. The exercises are the basis of all finger technique; once a student understands both how to work at them and how to apply what he learns, he has within himself the power to develop his fingers; with this and a grasp of the principles of chord playing, he can tackle and eventually overcome any technical difficulty. In addition to teaching



a pupil *how* to play the piano, Helmann trained him to be ever more acutely perceptive and self-critical; further, he instilled in him a sense of service and responsibility towards both creative musicians and the public, for he, as a performer, is the link between them. There was no compromise in the standard which Helmann set himself; his whole approach to music combined the arrogance of the artist who will accept nothing short of perfection with the humility of the man, ever amazed at the heights to which humans, against all odds, can attain. He would not undertake a rush performance of a work, known or unknown; nor would he play anything to which he felt he could not give of his best. This musical integrity, of such vital import yet so rare and little considered today, was implicit in every aspect of his teaching.

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## MESSIAEN—A PROVISIONAL STUDY (II)

David Drew

So far, Messiaen's career as a composer may be divided into three clearly-defined periods. The first extends from the organ piece *Le Banquet Céleste*, of 1928, to *L'Ascension* of 1934. The works of this period are from the beginning highly personal, though one feels that they present a logical and assured proposition which the later music must attempt to come to terms with. The works of the second period are accordingly more exploratory in nature. They culminate in the *Turangalila-Symphonie* of 1948. Like *L'Ascension* this work is a kind of summary of what has gone before; but unlike the earlier score, it does at the same time reach out towards the new regions disclosed in the subsequent works. These works of the third period may seem at first glance to bear no relation whatever to the works preceding *Turangalila*. But closer examination will show that the music still springs from the same premises. The gulf that separates the mono-tonal *Banquet Céleste* from the non-tonal *Livre d'Orgue* (1952) is not really so very wide; and even though the composer has arrived at the later style by a lengthy and circuitous route, his progress has been well-ordered. This can only be shown by discussing the works in chronological sequence, and selecting from them certain features that mark the line of continuity and development.

Whatever else one might say of the early works of Stravinsky, Bartok, and Hindemith, it is hardly possible to claim that they cast much light upon their composers' maturity. But with Messiaen—almost alone amongst contemporary composers of any stature—the opposite is the case. His first published work, *Le Banquet Céleste* for organ, written in 1928 at the age of twenty, is an entirely individual and confident utterance. The work is without pretensions, and is not of any great intrinsic importance, but its twenty-five bars show with extraordinary clarity the fundamentals of Messiaen's art. The most immediately striking feature is the chromatic modal harmony,<sup>1</sup> which remains characteristic of Messiaen up to and including *Turangalila*. The added sixth is already playing an important rôle in the chord-building, and there is a noticeable emphasis on the tritone, both melodically and as a factor in the harmonic relationships.

Harmonically the piece is at once primitive and highly sophisticated. It is quite static, and deliberately so. The music never leaves its home key of F sharp. If that

<sup>1</sup> A brief account of Messiaen's use of *modes à transpositions limitées* will be found in the first part of this article (December issue).

were all there was to it, the work would have no possible call on our attention. But in two crucial passages (bars 9-11 and 16-19) Messiaen introduces a dynamic element that gives a powerful meaning to the primarily static conception of the music. Both these passages provide a measure of contrast at a point where it becomes virtually imperative, but otherwise their functions are different. The first passage (which concludes the opening stanza) might seem to be merely cadential; yet its concentrated effect is such that it procures a *heightening* of interest. This is maintained at the start of the second stanza by a method peculiar to Messiaen. Thus far, the piece suggests the first part of a simple A-B-A structure; a more conventional composer would accordingly have introduced a contrasting idea in a new tonality at this stage. But instead, Messiaen repeats the theme of the first stanza, in an ornamented form. By pedantic standards this would of course be deemed a hopeless tautology; and indeed it would be by any other standards, were it not for the subtle force of the preceding passage, which, by some alchemy beyond analysis, gives the reprise the aspect of a wholly new and exciting event. This concept of reprise is peculiar to Messiaen, and an inseparable part of his philosophy. It informs many of his subsequent slow movements (notably in the *Visions de l'Amen*, the *Vingt Regards*, and *Turangalila*) and some of his fast ones. Being fraught with dangers, it has occasionally led to catastrophe.

The second crucial passage from the harmonic point of view<sup>2</sup> follows immediately upon the reprise of the theme. It is in fact the brief climax of this brief work, and makes use of the tension generated so unexpectedly by the reprise. The timing of this climax is perhaps the only conventional feature to be found in *Le Banquet Céleste*, and even then, the climax is not a true one, for the harmony never achieves ultimate resolution. The work ends just as it had begun—on a dominant seventh.

What lies between is only primitive in as much as it is undeveloping and undevelopable. In a sense the music has no beginning and no end, but only a centre (a chord) and an aura (its chromatic elaboration). We may dislike what it is trying to say, but the language in which it is said is so intimately involved with the composer's philosophy that we cannot reject that language *per se* without implicitly denying the composer his right to self-expression. We may legitimately ask ourselves how musical thinking of this kind can evolve a large structure, or even how it can evolve a small one, without repeating, formula-wise, the devices that save *Le Banquet Céleste* from bathos. But we have no right to argue that the music is bad *because* it is static, primitive, undeveloping, or whatever else one chooses to call it. We must accept that the music *is* all these things, as we must at times with Stravinsky, or on a lower level, Satie and Weill, and we must then ask ourselves whether there is something else besides, something of imagination or feeling that compensates for the primitive element in the musical organism. I believe that these qualities are present,

<sup>2</sup> The two passages also deserve attention from the rhythmic point of view and I shall have cause to refer to them again when considering the problems of symmetry and asymmetry in Messiaen's later music.



in a somewhat unfamiliar form, throughout *Le Banquet Céleste*—and indeed throughout the larger part of Messiaen's *oeuvre*, though they are not always sufficient to mitigate certain deficiencies and limitations.

*Le Banquet Céleste* was followed a year later by the eight *Préludes* for piano. This collection has a similar place in Messiaen's output to that of the suite *Pour le Piano* in Debussy's. Both had been preceded by more original work, yet each, despite a certain indebtedness to outside influence, is individual and forward-looking. The Messiaen *Préludes* are the legitimate off-spring of the piano music of Debussy and Ravel (though the rather unsatisfactory fourth prelude harks back to early Satie). The ancestry can be detected, not in the ideas themselves,<sup>3</sup> but in the sonorities (which are often Debussyan) and the figurations (which tend to be Ravellian). Occasionally Messiaen will adopt a procedure alien to both these composers, while still operating within their familiar fields of expression; the canonic working in the second and sixth preludes affords a notable example of this. At other times the ideas and the syntax are entirely personal. Here, from the opening of the fifth prelude, is one such passage—incidentally the only instance of polymodal *ostinato* in the works of Messiaen's first period. It anticipates by some years the common practice of later works.

#### Ex. 1

Modéré 8

pp stacc:

Ped.

mf

(cuivrez la partie supérieure)

Ped:

Ped:

Ped:

Ped:

Formally the majority of the preludes follow simple traditional schemes. One that does not—the first—comes to grief, and the reasons for the failure are worth considering. The formal scheme is the same as that of *Le Banquet Céleste*—namely a single stanza with varied repeat. But in this instance the transition to the repeat is somewhat perfunctory, with the result that the repeat is quite redundant, and merely serves to emphasise the undistinguished content of the first stanza. In *Le Banquet*

<sup>3</sup> The sixth prelude is a partial exception to this rule. Its debt to Ravel's *Le Gibet* is unmistakable.

*Céleste* (where the nervous and emotional pressures underlying the music had been immeasurably stronger) the form had belonged intimately to the idea of the piece. Here it does not.

We may learn two valuable things about Messiaen from the differing success of these two pieces: first, that however simple, or even unmusical, Messiaen's forms may seem in the abstract, they must be judged like any other form—in relation to the content and its expressive purpose; and secondly, that the static, or cataleptic, form can have no meaning unless it has at its centre an impulse of the utmost intensity, and unless its realization is carried through with singular precision. There can be no faltering in this trance-like walk across the tight-rope that links the simple to the sublime.

Happily, the failure of the first piano prelude is uncharacteristic of the set as a whole. Indeed, I am not aware of any modern French composer, other than Debussy or Ravel, who has written piano music that is more imaginative and more keenly felt. Of all Messiaen's works they are perhaps the most effective, in the conventional sense of the word.

The works dating from 1930 need not detain us. Messiaen himself regards the *Diptyque* for organ as uncharacteristic, though the melody of its second part reappeared in a new form some twenty-one years later as the principal idea of one of the movements of the *Quatour pour la fin du temps*. The first half of the *Diptyque* is weaker than Franck at his weakest, and is better forgotten. The three songs of the same year are not without a certain sweet charm, but they lack distinction (particularly of melody) and seem a trifle dim and regressive after the brilliance of the *Préludes*. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of *La mort du Nombre* for soprano, tenor, violin and piano.

The *méditation symphonique*, *Les Offrandes Oubliées* (also 1930) is of much greater importance. The opening *lento* section at once displays a new melodic freedom, and with it a wider range of expression. The phrases expand and contract with unusual flexibility, and certain melodic formulae that had already become over-worked in Messiaen's music, are dispensed with altogether. The central section of the work affords the only instance in Messiaen's music of the kind of surface violence that Honegger has made all too familiar. (It is also the only portion of Messiaen's sacred output that is extra-musically concerned with Man rather than with the Divinity. Part of the inscription for this passage runs: 'Nous descendions dans le pèche comme dans un tombeau'.) The closing *lento* does not, like the opening section, mark any new departure, but it enlarges successfully upon the methods adumbrated in such pieces as *Le Banquet Céleste*, the seventh *Prélude*, and the second of the three *Mélodies*. A comparison between *Le Banquet Céleste* and the final pages of *Les Offrandes Oubliées* will show how far Messiaen has advanced since the earlier piece. But, one might well ask, is it possible to advance further along these lines? Neither of the *lento* sections of *Les Offrandes Oubliées* contains any real development,

or even any potentialities for development. What more can Messiaen do with a melodic and harmonic idiom of this kind?

Stravinsky, at a time when he was faced with a similar problem (in the early 1920's) turned momentarily to variation form.<sup>4</sup> Messiaen now does likewise. The *Theme and Variations* for violin and piano of 1932 opens with a melody of the same type as that which concludes *Les Offrandes Oubliées*. But there is one notable difference between them.

In the orchestral work the wedding of the melody to its harmony is such that any subsequent development is unthinkable. But in the theme of the *Variations*, Messiaen has had to devise a more fluid harmonic texture, otherwise the variations would have no proper *raison d'être*. The result is a curious lack of tension between melody and accompaniment which is not wholly rectified until the theme, newly harmonized, returns with beautiful effect in the final variation.

This is not an ambitious work; still less is it a perfect one. But by and large it is one of the most valuable of Messiaen's early compositions. It did not, however, indicate any permanent way of escape from the *impasse* into which Messiaen's anti-developmental aesthetic had led him. The appalling inertia of the organ piece *L'Apparition de l'Eglise Eternelle*, dating from the same year as the *Variations*, confirms the necessity of some fresh and exploratory creative effort.

As if stepping back *pour mieux sauter*, Messiaen began work in 1932 on a large-scale composition that would act as a summary to his earlier achievements without involving him too deeply in the dangers implicit in them. The outcome was the set of four meditations for orchestra (first written for organ) entitled *L'Ascension*. For the reason I have put forward, they are closer to normal musical experience than anything else Messiaen has given us. But despite its rather special nature, the work contains not a single phrase or progression that is without the imprint of its author. Being relatively easy to appreciate, it provides an excellent introduction to Messiaen's style.

The least approachable of the movements is the first, which is very sensitively scored for woodwind and brass alone. It is the most ambitious of those works by Messiaen that seem to elaborate upon the 'pale, hieratic' style of Satie's *Rôle-Croix* pieces. The other movement in slow tempo, the fourth, is scored for strings alone, and is more conventional—at any rate on the surface, where a faint reflexion of the second of Greig's *Elegiac Melodies* may be discerned. When played at the indicated tempo—which it very seldom is—the piece has a disturbing beauty and directness.

The second movement opens with a pure monody—the first of many in Messiaen's music. Its continuation offers a strong clue as to the direction that Messiaen was soon to take. The third and most striking of the four movements is also the least

<sup>4</sup> In the *Octet for Wind Instruments*.



characteristic in some respects.<sup>5</sup> It might almost have been written to demonstrate, first, that Messiaen can, if he wishes, evolve a large and organically developing structure; and secondly that he does not despise the influence of the dance, even though he is not usually inclined to submit to it. The piece has many interesting features, but in view of the fact that Messiaen has never written another movement of this kind, a detailed analysis would be irrelevant to our main purpose.

Virgil Thomson<sup>6</sup> has compared *L'Ascension* to Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, and has detected in the two works similar virtues and what he takes to be similar faults, (largely of taste, it would seem). The comparison is not, I feel, a particularly useful one. Better surely to take as yardstick a work by a composer in the same tradition as Messiaen. The tone poem *La Péri* of Dukas answers our requirements perfectly; in the first place it is one of the most characteristic works by Messiaen's principal mentor, and in the second it has had an appreciable influence on Messiaen—especially the introduction and opening section. There are many beautiful things in *La Péri*, but they are interspersed with passages so derivative (especially from Franck) that the composer's own personality is completely engulfed. One is then conscious of a certain squareness in the build-up of phrases, a certain effort and lack of spontaneity. With Messiaen the same technical faults are sometimes evident, but there is never a moment's uncertainty of style. From the very first, his works are intensely personal. This may be attributed partly to his treatment of chromatic harmony, (governed by a consistent modality), and partly to his attitude towards the time-sense. Both these features present certain serious problems, in regard to the solution of which *L'Ascension* is only a masterly prevarication. It leaves Messiaen in much the same position as Debussy after writing the second book of *Préludes*, and Ravel after *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Those two works mark the real moment of crisis in modern French music. Debussy surmounted it most courageously in his late sonatas, but they offer a solution too personal and too limited to be an inspiration to others. Ravel and (less admirably) *Les Six*, merely turned down a side-track that by-passed the central issue—which was, how to direct towards more constructive ends an idiom that had become too pre-occupied with the sensuous. This is the fundamental problem that is re-formulated in Messiaen's early works. The terms in which it is stated are sufficiently eloquent and individual to persuade us that whatever he should attempt in his later work should command our serious attention, if not our approval.

There is a very clear line of demarcation between *L'Ascension* and the works which follow it. Although there is scarcely anything in these works that has not been suggested, however tentatively, in Messiaen's earlier music, it would be rash and misleading to overlook the essential re-orientation that much of the music implies. I say 'much of the music' advisedly, because there are occasions when Messiaen returns, as if in search of relaxation, to his earlier manner—much as Debussy did in the *Six Epigraphes Antiques* of 1915.

<sup>5</sup> It replaces the much weaker movement included in the organ version of the work.

<sup>6</sup> In *The Art of Judging Music*—Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948.

It is useful to compare Messiaen's position at this point with that of Stravinsky at the time of *Petrushka* and after. Stravinsky's overthrow of functional harmony (by means of *ostinato* techniques and/or empirical chord building) was chiefly the outcome of a preoccupation with rhythm and the dance. Logically enough, the effect of this preoccupation in its earliest stages had been the less radical step of harmonic simplification—an instance of which we find in the second, and best, movement of Stravinsky's E flat Symphony of 1905. Messiaen's earliest work is as drastically simplified, in its broad harmonic outlines, as anything by Stravinsky, but the suppression of extended or rapid harmonic motion is here an end in itself (musically speaking) and not a concomitant of a rhythmic-dynamic mode of thought. Stravinsky's establishment of rhythm as an autonomous element was intuitive in origin, though it was to some extent conditioned by the tradition to which he belonged.<sup>7</sup> The tradition from which Messiaen sprang was in no way analogous: the influence of 19th century French theatre music, which had left neither Debussy nor Ravel untouched, has passed him by, and the phraseology of his early work displays his debt to the none-too-lively examples of Franck and Dukas. That Messiaen subsequently proceeded to explore the field of rhythm was the result not of an intuitive process, but of certain definable structural requirements arising from the peculiar nature of his harmony. And so his position in this respect is the exact opposite of Stravinsky's: his rhythmic explorations are the effect, not the cause, of the harmonic situation. *La Nativité du Seigneur* marks a crucial turning-point in Messiaen's career because for the first time rhythm is used, however intermittently, to produce those effects of tension and relaxation, expectation and fulfilment which are no longer implicit, to any great extent, in his harmony.

At this stage Messiaen has not yet allowed the rhythm to determine the structure of the music, and of the two rhythmic procedures which he here favours, one at least—the addition or subtraction of a fractional time-value—is still governed by the harmony and melody. At times it is hard not to feel that the purpose of this device is destructive rather than constructive—destructive, that is, of a regular pulse, which the composer fears partly because the stimulating conflict of melodic and harmonic rhythm is largely denied him by the nature of his harmony, and partly for the very reason that he would seem to be too powerfully attracted by this pulse. Even more fundamental is the desire to escape from the tyranny of the symmetrical four-bar phrase which has haunted every French composer, good and bad, from Franck to Poulenc. Thus, to take a cynical view, one might say that the history of Messiaen's rhythmic explorations after *L'Ascension* is the history of his search for a convincing, or at any rate, consistent means of assuring the asymmetrical build-up of phrases and/or motifs. To take this view is, of course, to imply that in Messiaen's music there subsists a strong element of the mechanical and thus of the inartistic, an implication which is, I feel, justified in certain instances, but by no means the

<sup>7</sup> The passage following figure 34 of Tchaikovsky's Fantasy Overture, *Romeo and Juliet*, provides what is possibly the most remarkable precedent for Stravinsky's rhythmic methods.

majority. If we turn once again to the first of those two crucial phrases in *Le Banquet Céleste*,<sup>8</sup> we find that the asymmetry between it and its antecedent has been arrived at by the elimination of a crochet from each repetition of a motif which was originally of three crochets' duration. This elision might be described as mechanical in so far as it is not essential to the meaning of the passage and does not arise from any natural freedom in the life of the phrase. If this lack of rhythmic and phraseological vitality is a slight omen of more serious deficiencies which sometimes mark Messiaen's later work, a contrary suggestion (refuting the critical generalization quoted above) is made by the corresponding phrase<sup>9</sup> in the second stanza of *Le Banquet Céleste*. Here the phrase is symmetrical with its antecedent, and the asymmetry has been absorbed within the phrase. It arises quite naturally, and has its justification in the fact that it is an integral part of the phrase's climactic function. Messiaen's subsequent development of the added or subtracted time value is, as I have suggested, an extension of his interest in, and his feeling for, asymmetry. From the critical point of view, the problem remains the same: to distinguish between the extraneous and the integral. Compare for instance the two extracts from *La Nativité du Seigneur* shown on the opposite page (my remarks apply to the whole of the section from which they are taken).

In Example 2a the effect of the added values would seem to be entirely negative. The music could, for example, be re-written as a conventional 6/8 movement in *siciliana* rhythm without anything essential being lost. Whether one regards the original as a contracted 6/8 or an extended 4/8, the fact remains that rhythmically it is every bit as trite as the simpler form, whilst carrying the further stigma of pretence—pretence, that is, of freedom where in truth there is none. In Example 2b, on the other hand, the added values are inseparable from the expressive effect—'added' thus becomes an inexact description of the process. Not only do they increase the force of the (harmonically) added notes with which they are logically associated, but they involve the harmony in conflicts with the melody (and with one's expectation) in a manner that is, from a purely musical standpoint, highly stimulating. Stimulating, too, is the continual flexibility with which the preparatory, accentual, and cadential points expand and contract throughout the section under the influence of the added value. In the larger conflict which subsumes this piece—the conflict between the static (represented by the note G, the final of every period and almost every phrase) and the dynamic (represented, to an extent rare with Messiaen at this point, by the harmony, which involves the cadential G in no less than nine harmonic contexts)—the added rhythmic value may be seen to be playing its part in support of the dynamic principle.

In relation to Messiaen's future development, the more important of the two rhythmic innovations which he made in the immediate pre-war years was that which involved the concept of rhythm as an autonomous agent. The academic or neo-

<sup>8</sup> Bars 9-11.

<sup>9</sup> Bars 16-19.



## Ex. 2a

*Moderé, joyeux*  
*P clarinette et naxard*

## Ex. 2b

*Extrêmement lent et solennel*

P: cor net *P mf*

R: Fords *pp*  
*aux 8*

Ped: 16, 8 *pp legato*

academic musician will have no hesitation in condemning such a concept. Take for example the words of Ernest Ansermet:<sup>10</sup> 'We can never make a rhythm by adding, for example, a quaver and a semiquaver to a dotted quaver; a rhythm comes from the cadence of a motive or phrase, and if we look at it any other way this cadence is lacking. The rhythmic cadence is sister to the harmonic cadence; through this, movement is integrated with the internal dynamism of the music, because we are

<sup>10</sup> *Musical Experience and the World of Today*, by Ernest Ansermet, published in *The Score* December, 1952.

only aware of time, in our contingent bodily consciousness, in the form of a cadence which is that of our own movements or breathing—binary in action, ternary in sleep or relaxation'. It is not relevant to our purpose that these observations were made during the course of a perfectly valid criticism of a certain type of interpretative approach to a particular kind of music. The point is that they contain generalizations which are not at all applicable to a vast body of music, mediaeval, oriental and Afro-american, not to speak of works such as *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces* which M. Ansermet has himself conducted with such enthusiasm. In stigmatizing a pianist who regards the music of (say) Chopin as being contained in the printed page, Ansermet remarks that 'seen on the printed page . . . music consists of . . . an aggregation of lengths of time' and as such is presumably viewed as an *objet mort*, since it is divorced from our bodily consciousness, our awareness of time. Now 'an aggregation of lengths of time' happens to be a precise definition of the method by which Messiaen, proceeding inductively from the *faits accomplis* of *The Rite* (and the folk-music of India), arrived at the position of rhythmic autonomy. It must be obvious to everyone that Stravinsky's attitude towards the time factor, as made evident in *The Rite*, is very different from that of the nineteenth century composer. It is important to establish the exact nature of this difference, since the critics who have failed to appreciate it, either in its architectonic or its philosophical aspects, are likely to do for Messiaen what they have already done for Stravinsky—condemn the attitude as anti-musical.

One might say that the traditional view of rhythm involves the idea of a succession of various interpenetrating points of intensity arranged according to a measured time-scale, the degree of intensity being determined by the harmony. For Messiaen on the other hand rhythm is an extensive phenomenon that belongs more properly to the world of space and solids, since it consists of self-contained units whose significance lies not in their interpenetration, not in their development over a period of time, but in their juxtaposition one with another and in their relative volume and position rather than in their relative stress. As such, these units, like the component parts of a mobile, are both reversible and divisible, but never developable. If we compare, say, the opening of Beethoven's C major piano sonata, op. 53, with the opening of *Les Augures Printaniers* (from *The Rite*) this distinction is seen in its essential clarity. The 'idea' of the Beethoven passage is the accumulation of tension throughout an immense anacrusis, which culminates in the shift to the dominant's dominant in the last quarter of the second bar, is consummated with the arrival at the dominant, and then released in two stages. The nature of this event is such that at the recurrence of the idea a new, interacting, experience is dramatically imperative, rather than a repetition of the old. Hence the semiquaver variant of the original quaver motion, which radically alters the the rhythmic force of the idea. The Stravinsky passage also seems to give rise to tensions, but this is an extraneous and purely physical effect of something that is without tendency, something that involves no idea of 'becoming' but merely observes the behaviour

in space of certain objects, or cellules.<sup>11</sup> Even the unaccented episodes have their own rudimentary organization, analogous to the planning of spatial intervals in and around non-representational plastic art. But how can there be a conclusion, ideationally, to such a piece? Of course there can't be. Once one has set a mobile in motion, there is nothing further one can do except stop it: and that is precisely what happens in this music at figure 22. The merit or demerit of the thing revealed depends entirely upon the degree of satisfaction aroused by the proportions which become evident during the course of its revelation. The fact that Beethoven will often (for instance in the 5th Symphony) indulge in a very high degree of rhythmic-cellular organization does not mean that his practice has anything in common with that of Messiaen or the composer of *The Rite*. With Beethoven it is what *happens* that matters; Stravinsky and Messiaen are merely concerned with what *is*. In short, we find in this aspect of technique the familiar musico-dialectical antithesis of varied repetition and developing variation. No civilized man would have a moment's hesitation in deciding which is the higher order of thought, but we should beware of dismissing the inferior order as being of no interest. Provided that it embraces a constructive principle and a clear expressive aim, it is capable of producing a valid work of art. Such I believe *The Rite*, in large measure, to be. Whether the same is true of Messiaen's music, we shall shortly try to discover. But before concluding this necessarily objective survey of the factors underlying the idea of autonomous rhythm, I should like to quote a well-known passage from Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*, both because it reminds us that Stravinsky's position today in regard to time and rhythm is somewhat different from what it was forty years ago, and because it sheds light on Messiaen's by-now diametrically opposed position. Stravinsky is speaking of the two kinds of music envisaged by a philosopher (Pierre Souvtchinsky) with whom he finds himself sympathetic. 'One (kind of music)', he says, 'evolves parallel to the process of ontological time . . . inducing in the mind of the listener a feeling of euphoria and, so to speak, of "dynamic calm" (*viz.* Stravinsky today). The other kind runs ahead of, or counter to, this process. It is not self-contained in each momentary tonal unit. It dislocates the centres of attraction and gravity and sets itself up in the unstable; and this fact makes it particularly adaptable to the composer's emotive impulses. All music in which the will to expression is dominant (*viz.* that of Messiaen and the Stravinsky of 1913) belongs to this second type.'

Now let us examine the practical effects of rhythmic autonomy. The central section of *La Vierge et l'Enfant*, the first piece in the *La Nativité du Seigneur* sequence, affords a simple but striking example of Messiaen's new mode of thinking: the

<sup>11</sup> For a highly detailed analysis of the rhythmic structure of certain sections of *The Rite*, I would refer readers to the remarkable, if sometimes misguided article, *Stravinsky Demeure*, by Pierre Boulez, published in the first volume of *Musique Russe* (*Presses Universitaires de France*). This is substantially the same as the analysis which Messiaen has given in his Conservatoire classes since pre-war days, though Boulez has substituted quirks of his own for Messiaen's mystical analogies. Quite apart from its immediate purpose, the article offers the most complete theoretical demonstration at present available of the new attitude to rhythm which prevails amongst composers of the younger generation on the Continent and in England who follow Messiaen's lead.



musical materials precisely reflect the idea of the changeless yet ever-changing. Here are the first two bars.

## Ex. 3

An *ostinato* of eleven chords is the heart of the piece. This carries the weight of a 'plainchantesque' melodic decoration of the note D (which tends towards its tonic G sharp) and is in turn supported by a pedal part fixed as to notes but continually varied as to rhythm. In the eight bars of the first stanza the rhythm outlines eight interpretations of an 11/8 metre, and is internally constructed from two cellules, A and B, the first of which is varied six times, the second four times, and each of which is bisected by the other once. In the second stanza the bass repeats its rhythmic discourse, but the up-beat of the upper melody is twice shifted, so that it coincides with the harmonic *ostinato* at a different point. The melodic continuation is substantially varied, and the stanza is extended by three bars (making eleven in all). The eighth, ninth, and tenth bars add three more interpretations of the 11/8 metre (and, incidentally, of each of the two cellules) making, once again, eleven in all. In the third variant the bass at last coincides, rhythmically, with the even semiquavers of the harmonic *ostinato*, and the piece concludes with the 6 plus 5 quavers which are at once its *fons et origo* and its perpetual home. Here one can recognize an all-embracing concept, to which is related a highly efficient, and in a most unusual sense, a highly economical technique. One is made conscious both<sup>12</sup> of an eternal mystery (through the medium of the harmonic and rhythmic elements) and of a specific experience (evoked by the jubilatory melodic figure). But I cannot feel that the music of this section gains anything from the contrasting idea (*La Vierge?*) with which it is flanked. Although less flagrantly improvisatory than the introduction to *Le Verbe*, this lengthy rhapsody on the mode 2 cadence figure<sup>13</sup> seems weak in itself and gratuitous in relation to the whole. This problem becomes more acute in the three song-cycles, where the un-integrated elements can no longer be regarded

<sup>12</sup> The multiplanar conception of a musical movement is another significant innovation made by Messiaen at this time.

<sup>13</sup> See Ex. 2 in the first article of the present study.

as the relatively vague periphery of a more concrete mass, simply because there is *no* concrete mass such as we find in these two organ pieces.

But to return to questions of rhythm. Whilst the cellular organization of the bass part of *La Vierge et l'Enfant* reveals a new attitude, in that it necessitates a complete break with harmonic tensions, an element of earlier practice remains in the subservience to metrical division. This is not typical. Usually, when the rhythmic argument is confined to a single line set against a regular metrical pulse, it takes no account of that pulse. Compare Ex. 3 with the following extract from the song *Action de grâces* (*Poèmes pour Mi*, 1936).

Ex. 4



The entire melody, which is a lengthy one, rests on a single harmony, the common chord of F sharp major, with added sixth. The arpeggiated semiquaver figurations of the accompaniment suggest that the time-signature is 7/8, but the melody extends itself quite freely against this. In the song *Antienne du silence* (*Chants de Terre et de Ciel*, 1938) the melody-rhythm is again given to the voice, but on this occasion even the accompaniment, in three parts, avoids any regularity.

Single-line rhythmic inventions of this kind occur almost exclusively in the vocal music, where they are an ideal adjunct to the kind of vocalise (usually on the word *alleluia*) for which Messiaen shows a marked preference. Their justification is self-evident. But the polyrhythms which abound in his instrumental music are more problematic. These polyrhythms are of two kinds. The first is an extension of the *ostinato* technique, a technique whose rigidity is so attractive to Messiaen that a method of extension had to be found if repetition was not to be brought to the point of utter imbecility. The oft-observed fact that there is no musical reason why an *ostinato*, once started, should ever stop has occasionally been made the ground for a powerful musico-dramatic point,<sup>14</sup> but in general the composer must find some means of leading the thought out of the immediate area of the *ostinato* and thence to a new event or to a full conclusion. (The final bars of Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète* are surely the classic example of the latter achievement.) For Messiaen there is no compulsion to *lead* anywhere, so another, artificial, means must be found

<sup>14</sup> I would cite the endings of *Socrate* and *Wozzeck* as early examples of this, and the endings of the first movements of Blacher's *Orchester-Ornament* and Roberto Gerhard's *Symphony* as recent ones.

of concluding an *ostinato* or of justifying its continuation. Once rhythm has been divorced from harmony this becomes comparatively easy—indeed, too easy—for it is then possible to have what one might call an ambivalent *ostinato*, that is to say a rhythmic *ostinato* attached to, but independent of, a harmonic or melodic *ostinato*. For instance, a melodic *ostinato* of five notes may carry a rhythmic *ostinato* of six terms; the sequence is completed with the sixth repetition of the melodic motif. An analogous effect may be obtained by combining two rhythmic *ostinati* of differing quantity. There is a simple example of this in the introduction to *Le Verbe*, where a cadential phrase of ten semiquavers' value is repeated nine times against a chordal succession of nine semiquavers' value. The passage is clearly intended to accumulate tension prior to a reprise—it is, incidentally, marked *crescendo molto*—but the preceding events have been so desultory that its effect is nullified. The device itself is too crude to be of more than limited value at the best of times.

It is typical of Messiaen that, having conceived the two ideas of the ambivalent *ostinato* and the multiple rhythmic *ostinato*, he should then seek to combine them. In the first movement of the *Quatour pour la fin du Temps* (1941) we find two superimposed rhythmic *ostinati* of disparate quantity, each of which contains a further disparity between its rhythmic and melodic terms. Thus the *ostinati* prescribe three distinct orders of rotary motion—two internal and one external. These are quite perceptible at first hearing, but the effort of conscious perception is misguided, for the *ostinati* are only intended as a kind of trellis-work for the two free parts which ramble impressionistically over them. Despite the apparently complex formalism, the appeal of this music is essentially decorative. The complexity is thus an illusion, but not in any way a dishonest one, for illusion is the very stuff of this kind of music. Messiaen seems unlikely to forget his teacher Dukas's doubtless corrective advice:<sup>15</sup> 'travaillez dans le complexe plus que dans le compliqué'.

Even those—and I do not count myself among them—who are most favourably disposed towards complexity of this nature must admit that it involves a somewhat alarming proportion of the haphazard and the un-integrated. Besides which, it is undeniable that after an *ostinato* cycle has been set in motion, the music 'composes itself'—in other words the active creative process comes to an abrupt end. The fact that Messiaen has shown an increasing preference for 'rhythmic canon' as a means of arriving at polyrhythm indicates that he is himself aware of the need for greater integration, but this method still permits, even encourages, a certain degree of automatic composition. The term 'rhythmic canon' is a singularly inefficient one—it is Messiaen's own—though it is difficult to see how it can be avoided. The analogy with traditional melodic canon is useful in only one respect: close canon, for instance fugal *stretto*, derives much of its power from the reduplication (intensification) of rhythmic motifs. The rhythmic canon is an attempt to derive power from the same source. When the canon commences at the start of a piece (as in *Action de grâces*) the intensification is absolute rather than relative. Indeed, the

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Messiaen in an article in the Dukas memorial issue of *Le Revue Musicale*.



tendency of the rhythmic thinking in this piece is towards a release of tension (which is also the case with the harmony). The final section of the song presents a variant (by diminution and elision—*vide* Ex. 4) of the canon subject (*vide* Ex. 5a of the first part of this study), contrasting the complex harmonies which envelope the canon with its own single harmony.

For obvious reasons it was not possible for Messiaen to exploit the effect of *progressively* increased intensification of motif-structure by means of rhythmic canon until he was prepared to fulfil a rhythmic scheme on a large scale. An ambitious controlling scheme appears for the first time in the opening movement of the *Quatuor*, as we have already seen, but here the procedure is not canonic. However, in the final movement of the *Visions de L'Amen* for two pianos (1943) there is just such a scheme. The two-part canon appears in three forms (with repetitions governed by the asynchronous melodic/harmonic *ostinati*): the first at the interval of a minim, the second at the interval of a crochet, and the third at the interval of a quaver. This intensification is paralleled by the dynamic indications, which at the third canon, allow the carillon-like melodic-harmonic appendages of the rhythmic scheme to overpower the 'hymn theme' of which it was at first the distant and unrelated accompaniment. At this point the rhythms 'topple over' and resolve themselves into a steady flow of quavers and semiquavers which continues until the end of the piece. As with more than one other work by Messiaen, the general concept is akin to that of Ravel's *Bolero*,<sup>16</sup> the rhythmic dissolution after the third canon being analogous in effect to the modulation at the end of *Bolero*. During the course of the canons the rhythmic subject is stated fourteen times (and the melodic *ostinati* each more than five times fourteen). In *Bolero* the subject is heard nine times. Plainly we are not dealing with a very high level of musical thought, yet both composers must be judged successful in attaining a limited though clearly imagined end.

The final movement of *Visions de L'Amen* is not the only part of this work in which the composer attempts to build a closely unified structure. Indeed the entire suite shows similar pre-occupations, to a degree and extent unprecedented in Messiaen's output up to that time. I propose to open the final section of this study with an examination of a movement from the *Visions* in the light of general problems of structure, with reference to earlier works, some of which we have already considered from other points of view.

<sup>16</sup> This curious and by no means contemptible work is surely the classic example, and the *ne plus ultra*, of varied repetition. Its position in relation to the crisis of French music in our time is usually overlooked.

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### *Monthly Talks*

A series of informal talks is being planned for the coming winter. The first two will be given by Frank Pelleg, on *Music in Israel* (October 11th); and by Robert Donington, on *The Interpretation of 18th century Music* (November 8th). The series will continue until April, 1955.

### *Concerts in the Music Room*

October 27th: Recital of works for violin by Richard Arnell: First Sonata; Partita for violin solo; Second Sonata. Marta Eitler (violin), Richard Arnell (piano).

November 15th: First London recital by the Juilliard Quartet: Schoenberg, Quartet No. 3; Anton Webern, Five movements for String Quartet; Bela Bartok, Quartet No. 6.

### *I.M.A. Award*

The winners of this year's Concert Award, Miss Margaret Major (viola) and Miss Patricia Carroll (piano), will play at the Geneva Conservatoire on November 1st and for the *Jeunesses Musicales de France* in Paris on November 3rd. Their programme will consist of works by Haydn, Schubert, Bartok, Arnold Bax, Hindemith and John Ireland.

On December 1st, Miss Major and Miss Carroll will play together in the Royal Festival Hall Recital Room.

*Gramophone Evenings*

These will be held again every month from October to July, and will aim, as last season, at including records that are not available in the ordinary way. Members are invited to bring friends to these gramophone evenings. The first three programmes will include the following works:

October 18th: Schoenberg, *Serenade*, op. 24; Lou Harrison, *Suite* for violin, piano and small orchestra; John Blow, *Ode on the Death of Purcell*; Schütz, *Musikalische Exequien*.

November 22nd: Charles Ives, *The Unanswered Question* and *The Housatonic at Stockbridge*; Stravinsky, *Capriccio*; Cherubini, *Requiem*.

December 13th: Henry Cowell, Piano Music; Aaron Copland, *Concerto* for clarinet and string orchestra; Stravinsky, *Symphony in C*; Haydn, pieces for mechanical clock; Bach, Cantata: *Ich habe genug* (Fischer-Dieskau).



## NEWS AND COMMENTS

## GREAT BRITAIN

The following figures, based on concerts given at the Royal Festival Hall during the year ending August 31st, 1954, may not be without interest:

<i>No. of Concerts.</i>	<i>Type of programme.</i>	<i>Average No. of Unsold Seats.</i>	<i>Average Ticket receipts (after deduction of Box Office Commission).</i>
119	Programmes of entirely familiar music ... ..	372	£ 861
31	Programmes including some unfamiliar music but no contemporary music ... ..	931	601
43	Programmes including some contemporary music	1,159	486
4	Programmes consisting exclusively of contempor- ary music ... ..	1,578	347
197			

It is worth while to compare the average receipts given in the last column, with the following estimates of expenses involved in putting on orchestral concerts:

	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	
Orchestra of 75 players ... ..	£350	£450	
Conductor ... ..	53	78	
Soloist ... ..	31	42	
Sundries, music hire, etc. ... ..	6	10	
Rent ... ..	220	220	
Advertising and printing ... ..	100	150	
	760 to	950	
Extra rehearsal ... ..		150	} to £1,230
Increased fees if a more expensive conductor and soloist are engaged ... ..		130	

Thus we need not wonder that only once in ninety evenings does anyone dare to put on a programme of contemporary music. It is a most unhealthy situation; but thanks to the enterprise of Mr. T. E. Bean, the Manager of the Royal Festival Hall, an attempt will be made during the next year or so to arrange, in collaboration with the British Section of the I.S.C.M., a few late-night contemporary programmes of the finest quality both in choice of works and in standards of performance. The concerts will begin at 10.15 p.m. or 10.30 p.m., and will last an hour, so that the audience can just catch the last tubes and buses. The present plan is to inaugurate this series with a visit from members of the Südwestfunk Orchestra under Hans Rosbaud, whose performances of contemporary works are unexcelled (see list of programmes under I.C.A. music section).

*Public Concerts*

The Arts Council will sponsor four concerts of chamber works by Mozart at Wigmore Hall next year, with the following programmes:

May 4: Variations in F on 'Ein Weib ist das herrlichste Ding', for pianoforte, K.613; Sonata in G for pianoforte duet, K.357; Sonata in D for two pianofortes, K.448; Sonata in C for pianoforte duet, K.19D (played on the fortepiano); Six German Dances in D, G, E flat, F, A and C, K.509 (Mozart's own pianoforte version of the original work for orchestra); Fantasia in F minor for mechanical organ, K.608, arranged for two pianofortes by Busoni.

May 11: Trio in G for pianoforte, violin and 'cello, K.496; Cantata in C: 'Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls Schöpfer ehrt' for tenor and pianoforte, K.619; Canons for four sopranos, K.553, K.558, K.555, and K.560; Five Nocturnes, for 3 voices and 3 wind instruments, K.346, K.436, 7, 8 and 9; Trio in E for pianoforte, violin and 'cello, K.542.

May 18: Quartet in F for oboe, violin, viola and 'cello, K.370; Two three-part fugues from the '48 (Book 2, Nos. 14 and 13) with introductory Adagios by Mozart—for violin, viola and 'cello, K.404a; Adagio in C for harmonica, K.356; Adagio in C Minor and Rondo in C, for harmonica, flute, oboe, viola and 'cello, K.617; Divertimento in E flat for violin, viola and 'cello, K.563.

May 25: Piano Quartet in E flat major, K.493; Divertimento in B flat for string quartet and two horns, K.287; Duo in B flat for violin and viola, K.424; Quartet in G minor for pianoforte, violin, viola and 'cello, K.478.

Artists will include the Vegh Quartet, Pasquier Trio, Rubbra-Gruenberg-Pleeth Trio, Bruno Hoffmann (harmonica), Alexander Young, Joyce Rathbone, George Malcolm and William Glock.

The I.C.A. Music Section (British Section of the I.S.C.M.) will present the following programmes in London between November, 1955 and May, 1956:

November 18 (Wigmore Hall): Elliott Carter, Quartet; Fartein Valen, Quartet Op. 10; Bartok, Quartet No. 4. *Juilliard String Quartet*.

December 20 (Wigmore Hall): A new work for four horns by Michael Tippett;\* Giselher Klebe, Violin Sonata; Vaughan Williams, Violin Sonata; Hindemith, Horn Quartet. *Frederick Grinke, Michael Mullinar and Dennis Brain's Ensemble*.

January 24 (Wigmore Hall): Debussy, Three Etudes and Three Preludes; Pierre Boulez, Sonata No. 2; Olivier Messiaen, Canteyodjaya. *Yvonne Loriod*.

February 7 (Arts Council): Alan Rawsthorne, new work for tenor, flute, clarinet and percussion;\* Marc Wilkinson, Piece for solo clarinet;\* Roberto Gerhard, Scena for contralto and percussion;\* Makoto Moroi, Partita pour flûte seul; two songs for tenor by Arnold Cooke (This Worldes Joie) and Malcolm Williamson (Aye Flattering Fortune); Christopher Shaw, Keats's 'Bright Star' Sonnet, for tenor and clarinet;\* Phyllis Tate, Sonata for 'cello and clarinet.

February 28 (Wigmore Hall): Programme of contemporary Scottish music: Iain Hamilton, setting for four voices and instruments of poems by Burns;\* Robert Crawford, Quintet for clarinet and strings;\* Thea Musgrave, Cantata for a Summer's Day, for four voices, string quartet double bass, flute, clarinet and reciter. *Saltire Singers, Ex-members of the National Youth Orchestra*.

March 27 (Wigmore Hall): Aaron Copland, Piano Sonata; Charles Ives, Songs; Priaulx Rainier, 6 Keyboard pieces (1st performance); Constant Lambert, Li-Po Songs; Alberto Ginastera, Piano Sonata. *Noel Lee, Alexander Young*.

April 21 (Royal Festival Hall): Programme of Contemporary Organ Music: New works by Wilfrid Mellers,\* Elisabeth Lutyens,\* and Humphrey Searle;\* Schoenberg, Variations Op. 40; Messiaen, Messe de la Pentecote. *Ralph Downes, Olivier Messiaen*.

\* Works written specially for these concerts.

In addition, it is hoped that Hans Rosbaud and members of the Südwestfunk Orchestra will visit England at the end of April to give one broadcast and one late night concert (10.15 p.m.) in the Festival Hall. The programme will include: Stockhausen, Kontrapunkte for ten instruments; Stravinsky, Septet; Pierre Boulez, Le Marteau sans Maître.

A London concert will also be given, early in 1956, by the New Music Group in Manchester. The programme will include: Peter Maxwell Davies, Trumpet Sonata; Alexander Goehr, Fantasias for clarinet and piano; Elisabeth Lutyens, Valediction Op. 28 for clarinet and piano; Anton Webern, Variations for piano Op. 27; Richard Hall, Sonata for 'cello and piano; Elmer Seidel, Fantasia for piano; Nikos Skalkottas, Sonatina and Tender Melody.

#### *International Society for Contemporary Music*

The excellent idea was put forward during this year's International Festival at Baden-Baden that the October bulletin of the I.S.C.M. should include a list of works chosen by each individual section, and recommended to all the others as worthy of performance in their season's concerts. The English chamber and orchestral works chosen by the I.C.A. Committee for this purpose are as follows:

Francis Burt, Quartet; Arnold Cooke, Sinfonietta for chamber ensemble; Robert Crawford, String Quartet; Alexander Goehr, Fantasias for clarinet and piano; Dorothy Gow, String Quartet; Iain Hamilton, Fray of Suport; Elisabeth Lutyens, String Quartet No. 6; Anthony Milner, Oboe Quartet; Bernard Naylor, Three Latin Motets; Alan Rawsthorne, String Quartet No. 2; Phyllis Tate, Sonata for 'cello and clarinet.

Denis Apivor, Thamos and Amnon for soloists, chorus and orchestra; Malcolm Arnold, Symphony No. 1; Don Banks, Three Pieces for Orchestra; Alan Bush, Concert Piece for 'cello and orchestra; Daniel Jones, Symphony No. 4; Priaux Rainier, Sinfonia da Camera; Humphrey Searle, Symphony.

#### *News of Composers*

Alan Bush's second opera, *Men of Blackmoor*, will receive its world-première at the German National Theatre, Weimar, in April 1956. The libretto, as in the case of *Wat Tyler*, is by his wife, Nancy Bush. The subject of the opera is the struggle in the early 19th century of the Northumbrian miners against the harsh conditions of the *Bond*, an annual contract imposed upon them by the owners of the coal mines. This struggle is seen in its impact upon the lives and loves of the five main characters. Documents of the period provide the authentic basis for the social setting of the drama. Northumbrian folk-music provides the musical soil in which the idiom is rooted, but only one actual folk melody, that of the song *Sair feiled, hinny* is incorporated in the score.

*Sir Arthur Bliss's* Meditation on a Theme by John Blow will be given its first performance on December 13th by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

*Michael Tippett's* new Concerto for piano and orchestra will be given its first performance on January 31st, 1956 by the same orchestra.

The Südwestfunk has broadcast three works by *Francis Burt* this year: his String Quartet Op. 2; his Music for Two Pianos, Op. 4; and his Iambics for Orchestra, Op. 5. Burt is now writing an opera, *Volpone*, based on Ben Jonson.

*The Philharmonia Orchestra* will give twenty-three concerts in the U.S.A. and Canada in the early Autumn.

*Sir Thomas Beecham* conducted, during the Bergen Festival in June, two works by Fartein Valen: the symphonic poem *Nenia*, Op. 18, No. 1 and the *a cappella* motet, *Et dices in die illa*, Op. 16. Let us hope that he will also introduce these pieces to England.

We understand that Covent Garden plans to put on not only Janacek's *Jenufa*, but also in the fairly near future Roberto Gerhard's opera, *The Duenna*.

A group of music-lovers have formed an Arnold Bax Society for the purpose of sponsoring recordings of some of his more important works. The idea is to ask for 1,000 promises to buy a long-playing record of such a work as the 5th Symphony. The actual choice would depend on the amount of public support, the requests made by members of the society and the view of the recording company concerned. There is nothing to pay except the cost of the record when it is issued. Jean Sibelius has agreed to be the President of the Society. Among the Vice-Presidents are Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir Adrian Boult, Mr. John Christie, Miss Harriet Cohen, Mr. Charles Groves, Sir Compton Mackenzie, Mr. Alex Robertson, Dr. Rubbra, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Mr. Rudolf Schwarz, and Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams. Those wishing to know more about the society should write to Mr. Clifford W. Gillam, Downsview, Kings Barn Lane, Steyning, Sussex.



## UNITED STATES

Columbia have recorded Schoenberg's opera, *Moses and Aaron*, from the tapes made of the Hamburg performance in March, 1954. They will also issue shortly the complete works of Webern on three discs—made under the supervision of Robert Craft.

*Samuel Barber* is writing an opera with libretto by Gian Carl Menotti. So is *Duke Ellington*, with libretto by William Saroyan.

*Peggy Glanville Hicks's* new opera, *The Transposed Heads*, is to be given at the Pacific Coast Festival at Santa Barbara in September.

This opera has also been recorded by the Louisville Orchestra, as part of its astonishing scheme of issuing one L.P. per month of new contemporary works specially commissioned by Louisville. Other works included in the 1954-55 release schedule are Henry Cowell's *Symphony No. 11*, Peter Mennin's *Symphony No. 6*, Wallingford Riegger's *Variations for Piano and Orchestra*, Alan Hovhaness's *Concerto No. 7* for orchestra, Jacques Ibert's *Louisville Concerto*, Otto Luening's and Vladimir Ussachevsky's *Rhapsodic Variations for Tape recorder and orchestra*, Boris Blacher's *Studie in Pianissimo*, Op. 45, Luigi Dallapiccola's *Variazioni per Orchestra* (an orchestral version of his *Quaderno Musicale di Annalibera*, for piano), Henri Sauguet's *Les Trois Lys*, G. F. Malipiero's *Fantasie di Ogni Giorno*, Gottfried von Einem's *Meditations* and Richard Mohaupt's opera, *Double Trouble*.

*W. H. Auden* has recently translated the libretto of *The Magic Flute*, for performance at the Metropolitan.

*Milhaud's* opera, *Médée*, had its first American performance at the Brandeis University Festival in June. His choral ballet, *Salade*, was included in the same programme.

*Lukas Foss's* chamber opera, *The Jumping Frog*, was recently given several open-air performances at Avalon, near Sydney, Australia. The performances were entirely sold out.

The Tanglewood School of Music invited Boris Blacher to teach composition there this summer in place of Aaron Copland, who after twelve consecutive years of duty is enjoying a well-earned rest. The opera department of Tanglewood this year gave the première of Louis Mennini's one-act opera, *The Rope*. There were also productions of three contemporary chamber operas: *Romeo and Juliet*, by Blacher; *Ariadne Abandoned*, by Milhaud; and *Comedy on the Bridge*, by Martinu.

## ITALY

The Italian Third Programme is to broadcast the whole of Stravinsky's works, except *Le Roi des Etoiles*, in a series of eighteen weekly programmes beginning on October 4.

The Venice Festival of Contemporary Music begins on September 11, and will include the following programmes:

11th: Casella concert: *Sinfonia*, *Donna Serpente*; *Violin Concerto*; *Symphony Op. 63*.

13th: New works by Milhaud, G. F. Malipiero, Sauguet and Tansman. Also stage performance of Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin*, by the Théâtre de la Monnaie.

14th and 16th: First stage performance of Prokofiev's opera, *The Angel of Fire*.

17th: New works by Gino Contilli, Ghedini, Klebe and Beck.

18th: Variations for orchestra, by Roman Vlad; Cantata by Peragallo, part of the text being a letter he received, on his mother's death, from Luigi Dallapiccola.

19th: Chamber orchestral works by Vogel, Martinon, Zafred and Mieg.

*Dallapiccola* has written three new pieces for chorus and full orchestra, called *Canti di Liberazione*. Also a Cantata for soprano and orchestra which will have its first performance at Donaueschingen in October (see Germany).

*Roman Vlad* has recently been elected musical director of the Accademia Filarmonica in Rome. This society will give 25 concerts of chamber music, past and present, between November and next May. The programmes will include a substantial number of Frescobaldi's harpsichord pieces, played by Ralph Kirkpatrick, a number of madrigals by Gesualdo, Boccherini's Three Quintets for strings and guitar and Paganini's Quartets with guitar. There will be four concerts of works by Mozart to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his birth, with a first performance in Italy of *La Finta Semplice*; and, almost unique in a year concentrating singlemindedly upon

Mozart, with the prospect of a hundred new books on his music, a new edition of Köchel and Heaven knows what besides, Schumann will not be forgotten. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death, a number of Italian pianists will perform the whole of his piano works during the season. Turning to contemporary music, Bartok's *Mikrokosmos* will also be played in its entirety, by Frank Pelleg; all Webern's songs and works for piano will be heard; and the Drole Quartet will play all four of Schoenberg's String Quartets.

*Franco Abbiati* has just finished writing a five-volume work on Verdi. It will be published by Ricordi in 1957.

### FRANCE

From Paris comes the splendid news that Jacques Ibert has been appointed administrator of the Opéra and the Opéra-comique for a period of one year from October onwards.

Pierre Boulez sends the following outline of the Concerts du Domaine Musical to be given at the Marigny Theatre next season:

December 10 and 11: Schoenberg programme: Ode to Napoleon; Serenade Op. 24; Pierrot Lunaire. Conductor: Hermann Scherchen.

End of January: Webern, Quartet with saxophone, Op. 22; Bruno Maderna, String Quartet; Debussy, Etudes; Bartok, Etudes Op. 18; Berg, Lyric Suite. Parrenin Quartet and Paul Jacobs.

Middle of March: Works by Henze, Barraqué and Messiaen, specially written for the occasion; also a new work by Henri Pousseur, and Stravinsky's Symphonies of Wind Instruments. Conductor: Rudolf Albert.

April 25 and 26: Webern, Symphony Op. 21; Luigi Nono, Incontri; Stockhausen, Kontrapunkte; Webern, Lieder Op. 8 and Op. 13; Boulez, Le Marteau sans Maître. Conductor: Hans Rosbaud.

Apart from these programmes of contemporary works, Hermann Scherchen will conduct, on December 14, a performance of the Art of Fugue.

### SWEDEN

Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, conductor of the Hamburg Radio, has been appointed chief conductor of the Concert Society of Stockholm.

The 30th Festival of the I.S.C.M. will take place in Stockholm from June 3 to June 10, 1956. The International Jury, which will meet in Stockholm early in January to choose the programmes from works submitted by the various sections of the I.S.C.M., consists of Conrad Beck, Sten Broman, Juan Jose Castro, Roman Palester and Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt.

### AUSTRIA

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth, there will be a festival in Salzburg next January, with the following events:

January 21, 8 p.m.: La Finta Semplice

January 22, 9 a.m.: Mozart Masses, St. Peter's

11 a.m.: Programme by the Mozarteum Orchestra

8 p.m.: La Finta Semplice

January 23, 8 p.m.: Recital by Wilhelm Backhaus

January 24, 8 p.m.: Recital by Irmgaard Seefried and Wolfgang Schneiderhan

January 25, 8 p.m.: Concert under the auspices of the Camerata academica of the Mozarteum. (Artists not yet announced)

January 26, 9 p.m.: Concert by the Vienna Philharmonic, with Edwin Fischer

January 27, 10 a.m.: Festival Service in the Cathedral and in all other churches. Ceremony (National holiday) in the house where Mozart was born

8 p.m.: Idomeneo

January 28, 10 a.m.: Programme given by the Vienna Octet

8 p.m.: Concert by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan, with Walter Gieseke as soloist

- January 29, 11 a.m.: Concert by the Vienna Philharmonic under Dr. Karl Boehm. Soloist: Wilhelm Backhaus.  
                                     8 p.m.: Idomeneo  
 January 30, 8 p.m.: Concert by the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra under Joseph Keilberth. Soloist: Leopold Wlach.

## GERMANY

### K. A. Hartmann and *Musica Viva*

The fiftieth birthday of *Karl Amadeus Hartmann* (August 2) has been celebrated by performances of his works in many parts of Germany. The Hessischer Rundfunk broadcast his Second String Quartet and Sixth Symphony on August 3; the N.W.D.R. broadcast his Third Symphony on August 11; Erich Kleiber conducted his Second, Fourth and Sixth Symphonies over the Bayerischer Rundfunk on August 1; the Süddeutscher Rundfunk gave the first performance of his Cantata for soprano and pianoforte, on poems by Andreas Gryphius (August 1); and there were also 'birthday programmes' given by the Süddeutscher Rundfunk on August 1 and by the Südwestfunk on August 2.

Besides being one of the few outstanding German composers of the present day, however, Hartmann has also organized, during the last ten years, the remarkable series of *Musica Viva* concerts in Munich. Heinz Pringsheim sends the following account of these concerts, and of the part Karl Amadeus Hartmann has played in them.

'When we consider the growth and creation of the Munich *Musica Viva* concerts we find to our amazement the realization of something that seemed impossible. It seemed impossible because the capital of Bavaria was never really of an advanced disposition, clinging as it does to tradition, and regarding new pioneering movements with suspicion. Musically Munich was always considered a reactionary city. The situation clearly seemed unfavourable for the propagation of new music, from which Germany had been virtually cut off for twelve years. Also the destructive period of the Nazi regime, of war and of defeat, left the artistic and material conditions for the reconstruction of concert life in general in a very serious position. Nevertheless *Musica Viva* has grown comparatively quickly from a very modest start to its present triumphant success—a little *miracle of Munich*, but a miracle without mystery, created through great faith in the cause, and through the enthusiasm, the unflinching surefootedness and organizing ability of one man.

No more than half a year after the final collapse of Germany, Karl Amadeus Hartmann managed with the support of the Bavarian State Opera to put on the first native concert with new music. The support of the music-loving public was shamefully lacking. I remember sitting in the cold and much too large hall with 20 or 30 other freezing people. Only our burning interest in new sounds and ideas of which we had hardly any conception could warm us. Very gradually the circle of listeners increased. When the chamber music concerts moved from the Prince Regent's Theatre into the little theatre at the Brunnenhof in the royal palace, the circle had grown to some 40 or 50 people. This little theatre could not be kept indefinitely as a concert room, but fortunately a concert hall for chamber music and small orchestras had been built in the meantime. Thus the time of the concerts could at last be moved from Sunday morning to the usual and much more favourable hour of 7.30 p.m., which resulted in an increased public. A sympathetic public of about 100 could be depended on by now. This increased interest was partly due to the press—still very modest at the time (at first there was only the American-controlled *Neue Zeitung* soon followed by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and the regular musical reports of the Munich Radio which stressed the importance of these concerts of new music.

It was Hartmann's intention from the start to lead the younger generation to the new ideas expressed in contemporary music. His first task was therefore to win over the music teachers and induce them to free their pupils from the prejudices inherited from the previous generation. To achieve this end Hartmann invited a number of teachers into his home to explain to them the purpose of his endeavours. Through his untiring efforts he managed to interest a number of open-minded people and persuade them to widen their field and to influence their pupils accordingly. Hartmann's success soon became apparent. The teachers obtained tickets at greatly reduced prices for their pupils, until the demand began to exceed the supply. The same sort of propaganda was made in colleges and universities, and students too began to buy the reduced tickets in increasing numbers. They were also permitted, as they still are, to go to rehearsals. In this way a core of receptive and potentially enthusiastic young people was built up, who also began to reveal a critical sense as their knowledge grew.

An event of decisive importance for the artistic quality and expansion of the *Musica Viva* concerts was when the Director of Radio Munich, the progressively minded and far-seeing Rudolf



von Scholz, was won over two years later with the help of the music department of the radio. The organization of the series is now as follows: the Radio puts its Symphony Orchestra at the disposal of the organizers of *Musica Viva* and pays the fees of guest conductors and soloists entirely at its own expense. In return it has the right to make tape recordings in rehearsals and performances, thus building up a rich treasury of new music. From this the Monday night transmissions (originally Tuesday night) were built up a little later, and found strong interest in a public spread far beyond the borders of Germany. Two birds were killed with one stone—the *Musica Viva* series gained vast new possibilities from the artistic and material resources of the Radio, while the Radio obtained recordings from the concerts which it would otherwise have had to organize itself at the same cost. The cost of the artistically designed posters and programmes, based on the idea of the parallel between music and the visual arts, and all other costs are paid by the State Opera with the receipts from tickets.

The new organization soon bore fruit. The very first big orchestral concert in the hall of the University, then still the only suitable hall available, holding 1200 people, was practically sold out. And so it was with all subsequent concerts, even when they were moved to the bigger and more beautiful *Herkulesaal* built in the rooms of the old Bavarian royal palace and seating 1400 people, with standing room for 100. This material improvement was only possible because Hartmann succeeded in carrying out his original principle, which was to give only the best possible performance of new music, an *authentic* interpretation, for which purpose he engaged the most competent conductors and soloists. Apart from this basic principle it was intelligent programme building which contributed to the success of *Musica Viva*. It was never Hartmann's intention to produce only the newest and most problematical music. This would have tended to alienate rather than attract a willing audience. For this reason the programmes have been built from a carefully graded mixture of the following three groups:

1. The precursors of new music such as Satie, Debussy, Ravel, Busoni, Mahler, Reger.
2. The *classics* of new music and their pupils (the middle generation).
3. The young composers: Boulez, Nono, Henze, Stockhausen and others.

Apart from Bartok, Stravinsky and Hindemith, to each of whom a whole evening is sometimes devoted, the music was never taken from one group alone. This mixture has proved its worth.

The Munich *Musica Viva* has been imitated in other German towns such as Heidelberg and Oldenburg. But it has nowhere become such an important factor in musical life as in the *reactionary* Bavarian capital, where the conservative programmes of the regular concerts of the Philharmonic orchestra and the Radio orchestra are beginning to show its influence. The reasons for this have been brought out in this short sketch of the development of the *Musica Viva* concerts—the will and tireless energy of one completely devoted man; the intelligent and systematic approach to the education of the public and especially of the younger generation; and, not least important, the principle that new unaccustomed music must be offered only with the best possible performance.

Next season's *Musica Viva* programmes are as follows (the orchestra in every case is that of the Bavarian Radio):

November 19, 1955: Claude Debussy, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Conductor: André Clutyens, with soloists of the Opéra comique.

December 2, 1955: Igor Stravinsky, *Concertino* for string quartet; Wilhelm Killmayer, *Lorca Songs*; Igor Stravinsky, *Three Pieces* for string quartet; Pierre Boulez, *Le Marteau sans Maître*; Werner Egk, *Cantata*; Paul Hindemith, *Kammermusik No. 1*, Op. 24. Conductor: Rudolf Albert. Soloists: Wilma Lipp, Sibylla Plate, James Pease, and the Parrenin Quartet.

January 20, 1956: Paul Hindemith, *Konzertmusik* for piano and brass instruments; Igor Stravinsky, *Petrushka*; Rolf Liebermann, *Concerto* for Jazzband and Symphony Orchestra. Conductor Paul Strauss. Soloists: Monique Haas and the Kurt Edelhagen Orchestra of the Südwestfunk.

February 17, 1956: Peter Racine Fricker, *Symphony No. 1*; Bohuslav Martinu, *Concerto* for Two Pianos; Igor Stravinsky, *Pulcinella*, Ballet with Songs in one Act. Conductor: Eugen Jochum. Soloists: Hilde Zadek, Richard Holm, Kim Borg, (singers) and Janine Reding and Henri Piette (pianists).

March 9, 1956: Hans Werner Henze, *Symphonic Etudes*; Igor Stravinsky, *Capriccio*; Luigi Dallapiccola, *Il Prigioniero*. Conductor: Hermann Scherchen. Soloist: Nicole Henriot.

April 20, 1956: Bela Bartok's *Three Concertos* for Piano and Orchestra. Conductor: Ferenc Fricsay. Soloist: Geza Anda.

June 1, 1956: Igor Stravinsky, Concerto in D for strings; Boris Blacher, Piano Concerto No. 2; Manuel de Falla, Concerto for harpsichord; Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Concerto for viola and piano with accompaniment for wind and percussion. Conductor: Ernest Bour. Soloists: Gerty Herzog, Ralph Kirkpatrick and William Primrose.

July 6, 1956: Igor Stravinsky, Mass; Alban Berg, Violin Concerto; Claude Debussy, Jeux; Maurice Ravel, Alborado del Gracioso. Conductor: Ernest Ansermet. Soloist: Max Rostal; and the Bavarian Radio Choir.

The *Donaueschinger Musiktage* will take place on October 15 and 16, with the following programmes:

October 15: Chamber music: Anton Webern, 6 Bagatelles for string quartet, op. 9; Wilhelm Killmayer, Lorca songs for voice, piano and percussion; Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Sonata for viola solo;\* Henri Pousseur, Quintet for violin, 'cello, clarinet, bass clarinet and piano; Pierre Boulez, Livre pour quatuor;\* Constantin Regamey, Vocalises for soprano and piano;\* Vittorio Fellegara, Octet for percussion instruments.

October 16: Orchestral concert: Giselher Klebe, Moments musicaux;\* Luigi Dallapiccola Cantata for soprano and orchestra;\* Paul Hindemith, Konzertmusik for strings and brass; Yannis Xenakis, Les Metastassis;\* Mordechai Sheinkman, Piano concerto;\* Alban Berg, 3 orchestral pieces (1929 version). Conductor: Hans Rosbaud.

\* First Performance

Among many interesting contemporary works broadcast by the Südwestfunk during recent months were Blacher's Orchester-Ornament and Studie in Pianissimo, Busoni's String Quartet, Schoenberg's Orchestral Variations Op. 31, Stravinsky's Violin Concerto, Boulez's Le Marteau sans Maître, and Webern's Chamber Concerto, Op. 24.

#### *News of Composers*

Boris Blacher's chamber opera, Die Flut, was performed this summer at Flensburg, together with Bastien und Bastienne. The première of his new Cantata, Traüme vom Tod und vom Leben (text by Hans Arp), took place at Wuppertal in June.

Giselher Klebe's String Quartet, Op. 9 has had performances in Los Angeles and in Copenhagen. His Scene for four solo violins, tutti violins and piano duet was played under Hermann Scherchen at the Summer School of Music at Dartington on August 17.

Karlheinz Stockhausen has been commissioned by the Hamburg Radio to write a new orchestral work, which will be performed this winter and is called 'Gruppen in drei Orchestern'.

#### SWITZERLAND

Marc Wilkinson sends this note on the 1955 meeting at Gravesano:

'For the second year in succession a series of lectures and discussions took place at Professor Hermann Scherchen's studios in Gravesano, Switzerland (July 24-30). The topics were Light Music, Electro-acoustics, and their interrelation; and though these were sometimes a little obscured by other subjects, the conference was never without interest to the highly international audience. Lectures were delivered by Mr. Pierre Schaeffer of Paris (on 'Musique Concrète'), Dr. A. Moles (Paris), Dr. Enkel (Cologne), Mr. Frank Wade of the B.B.C., Mr. Kurt Blankopf (Vienna) and Dr. March (U.S.A.).

The term "Light Music" in itself proved a little troublesome, for no immediate and satisfactory definition was found for it. Dr. Mole's lecture, on the second day of the conference, attempted to categorize the meaning by a statistical use of the "Information Theory", but unfortunately his definition did not receive general approval until several days later. The "Information Theory", devised some years ago by Messieurs Levin and Morino in the U.S.A., tabulates in an intelligent, if over-simple manner, the quantity of information which a sound, or a set of sounds (melodic or harmonic) will convey to the human ear. If the theory is a relative one, and based on rather arbitrary abstractions, it at least has the advantage of reiterating and developing some simple truths: for example, a loud sound will be more "informative" than a soft sound if only because, in direct competition, the former will drown out the latter. Dr. Moles suggested that light music does not and should not present more than a small "information quota" to the listener, though he deplored the complete unoriginality of much light music of



today. His remarks on the effects of mass communication (through radio and other channels), and of electrical technicians on all kinds of music were on the whole as depressing as they were just.

Dr. Enkel and Dr. Meyer-Eppler presented outlines on the progress of electronics and its influence in the field of music. Recordings were played to illustrate the manipulation and distortion of sounds, and the insertion of purely electronic notes into works of light music; and there was an historical survey of electronic instruments from the 1920's to the present day. Much interest was aroused by Dr. Enkel's exposé concerning experiments which have been made with the human ear. These tests involved reaction to reverberation time, to echo time, to high and low frequencies, and to the perception of sound through a mantle of "white noise" (an audible static, comprising all frequencies at an equal dynamic level).

There were experiments on some of Professor Scherchen's new equipment, and at least three of these items deserve special mention. The first is a reverberation adaptor which records magnetically through six movable head-apertures, so making possible the addition of reverberation, up to one second in time, with complete accuracy. The second is a new German tape recorder which can alter the speed of a previous recording, or a performance, without changing its pitch. The mechanism, including a static and a swing-back magnetic head, is basically simple, and the results are impressive though not perfect. Finally, a multiple-filter instrument was demonstrated that can accurately filter frequencies by one-third octaves between sixty and six thousand cycles. Each third-octave has a button, placed in a vertical slit and controlling a tuned filter, so that the desired curve can easily be traced by the eye. Since the filtering process can be absolute, it is possible not only to create an overtone pattern *ad libitum*, but also to filter out the fundamentals and create sounds purely with harmonics; this with great ease and sureness.

In the final meeting, the "Friends of Gravesano" announced a further conference next year, probably concerned principally with electro-acoustics and composition.'



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

**ROBERT CRAFT:** Born 1923. American conductor. Graduate of the New York Military Academy and of the Juilliard School of Music. Has also studied philosophy at Columbia University. Studied conducting with Pierre Monteux in 1947, and composition with Igor Stravinsky, 1948-50. Conductor of Chamber Arts Society, New York Brass and Woodwind Ensemble and of the American Symphony Orchestra. Chief conductor of the Los Angeles concerts, 'Evenings on the Roof'.

**RONALD STEVENSON:** Born 1928. Studied piano with Iso Elinson and composition with Richard Hall at the Royal Manchester College of Music. His compositions include piano pieces, songs, a violin sonata and orchestral works, one of which, *Berceuse Symphonique*, was performed by the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra in its Young Composers' Concerts in June, 1953. In 1955 won an Italian Government Scholarship for research on Ferruccio Busoni, on whom he has compiled a *Symposium* (on the suggestion of Busoni's widow), with a large-scale book to follow. Is an active pianist and contributes to various music magazines.

**YEHUDI MENUHIN:** Born 1917 in New York. One of the greatest violinists of his generation. Studied first in New York with Louis Persinger before coming to Europe to study with Georges Enesco. Made his debut in Paris in 1927. His tribute to Enesco was broadcast this summer in the Home Service.

**KLAUS EGGE:** Composer and music critic. Born 1906. Studied in Berlin, 1937-38 and later with Fartein Valen. Is President of the Norwegian State Council for the Arts, and of Norwegian Composers' Association. Music critic of the Norwegian national newspaper, *Arbeiderbladet*. His compositions include two symphonies, two concertos for piano and one for violin, and various chamber works.

**MARGARET STEVENSON:** Born 1921. Pianist. Studied at the Royal College of Music, and with Aleksandr Helmann from 1951 until his death in 1954.

**DAVID DREW:** Born 1930 in London. Educated at Harrow and Peterhouse, Cambridge. The first part of his substantial study on Messiaen appeared in the December, 1954 issue of *The Score*. The final section will appear in December, 1955.

**ROMAN VLAD:** Born 1919 in Czernowitz (Bukowina) and has lived in Rome since 1938. Took diploma of master class in piano at Accademia Nazionale de Santa Lucia in 1941, and studied composition with Casella. His recent works include *Five Elegies* for Baritone and string orchestra on Latin texts from the Bible; *Le Ciel est Vide*, cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra (which can be performed either with the French text by Gérard de Nerval or with German text by Jean Paul Richter); and *Variazioni Concertanti su una serie di 12-note dal 'Don Giovanni' di Mozart*, for piano and orchestra, which will be played for the first time at this year's Venice Festival. His review of *Die Reihe* is printed by kind permission of Guido M. Gatti, editor of *La Rassegna Musicale*.

The *Gravesaner Blätter*, a new quarterly magazine of great technical interest edited by Hermann Scherchen, can be obtained from the office of The Score and I.M.A. Magazine. The first issue appeared in July, in various languages, with summaries in English and French. In future, however, two separate editions of each issue will be printed, one in English and one in German. The magazine may be bought either separately for 5/-, or with the small gramophone record accompanying each issue, for 9/6d.

Robert Evett writes to say that in his article in the June issue, he meant to refer (on page 35) to the *Second*, not the Third, Quartet by Peter Mennin.

